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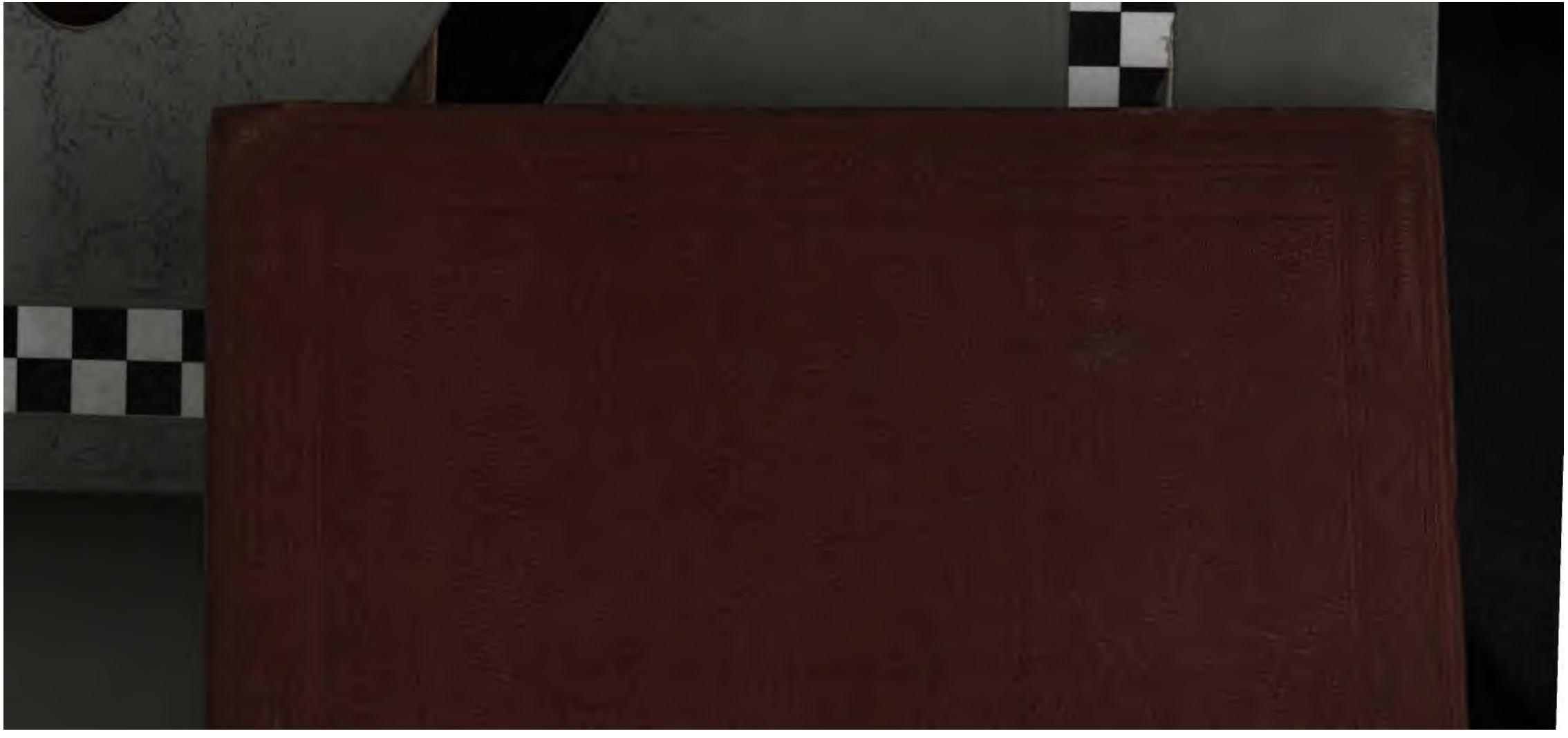

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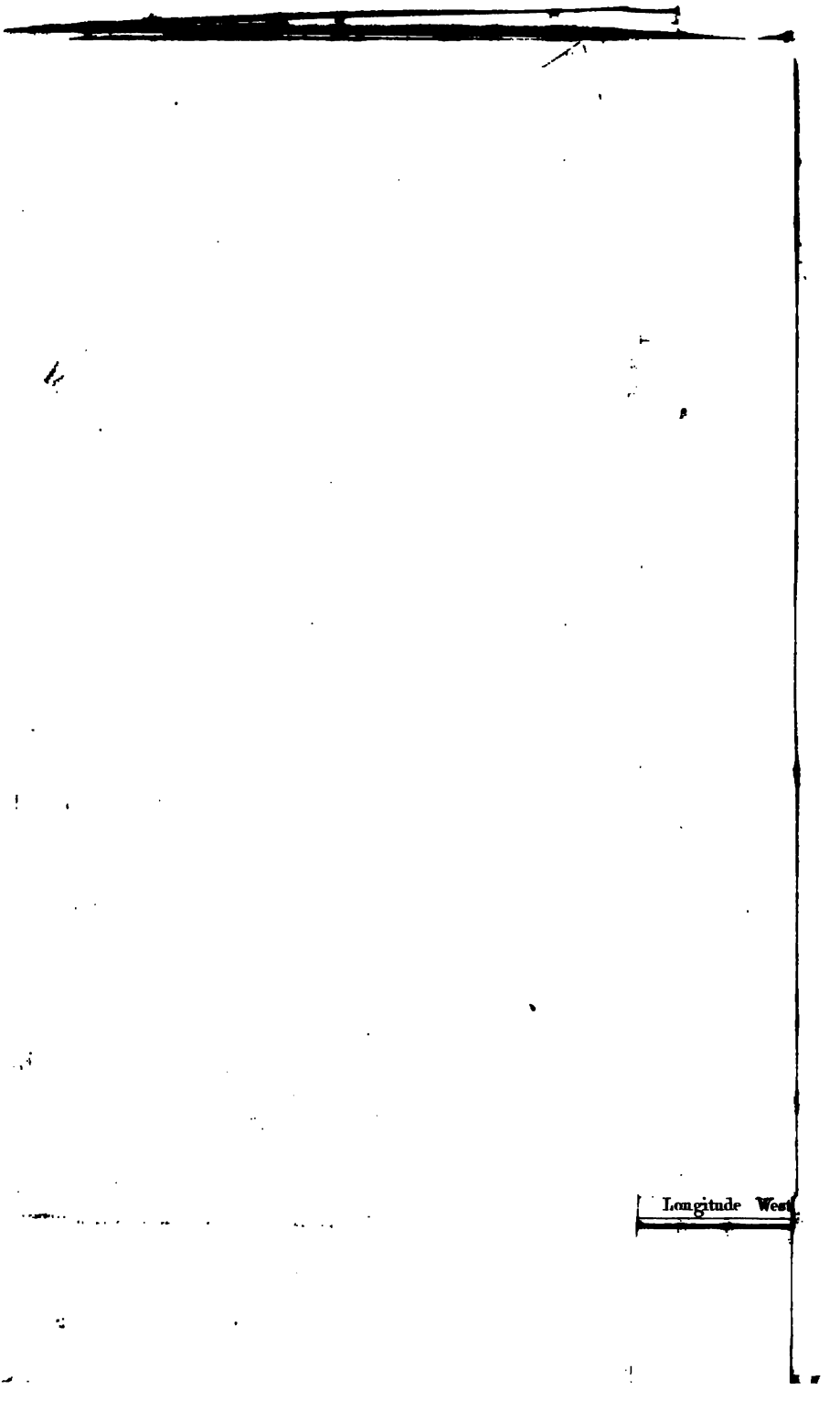
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MISSIONARY ADVENTURES

IN

TEXAS AND MEXICO.

A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

OF

SIX YEARS' SOJOURN IN THOSE REGIONS.

BY THE ABBÉ DOMENECH.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

UNDER THE AUTHOR'S SUPERINTENDENCE.

LONDON:

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, LONGMANS, AND ROBERTS.

1858.

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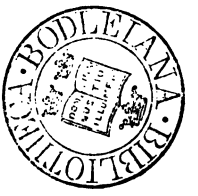
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TO

HIS LORDSHIP DR. ODIN

BISHOP OF GALVESTON.

My Lord,

Although the number of Apostolic Labourers in our Lord's Vineyard is very limited in the vast diocese over which your Lordship presides with so much zeal and self-denial, it has pleased Divine Providence to diminish still further this number already quite inadequate to its wants. In some, physical strength has given way rather than moral energy—others have succumbed to their glorious sufferings—whilst others have been called away to labour in another part of that immense field, of which it is written: "The harvest is great, but the labourers are few."

I was very young and inexperienced, my Lord, when I consecrated myself to this noble and laborious task; and the fatigues and trials which everywhere accompany the missionary, have produced in me the saddest result. I had scarcely applied my hand to the work, when I felt that my frail constitution did not at all correspond to the promptings of my courage; and, after five years' hard labour, my shattered health obliged me to return twice to the country of my birth to seek a remedy which I have not yet found.

And now that Providence, through the instrumentality of medical science, has condemned me to a more sterile and quiet existence, the memory of those fine and interesting missions, to which I was sincerely attached, is deeply engraven on my heart, like a dream of happiness which one remembers with regret.

Being thus incapacitated from labouring on the theatre of the missions which you have superintended with all the zeal and devotedness of an apostle for such a number of years,—no longer associated, alas! in that good work which has enlisted all my warmest sympathies,—destined never again to revisit those mixed populations which roam through the solitudes of the new world, shut out, in a great measure, from all spiritual help, I desire, my Lord, to unite myself at least in spirit to your holy enterprise, and to come to its aid (if I may be permitted to express myself thus) by proclaiming to the world your wants, your difficulties, and the touching details of your poverty.

It seemed to me that a complete and thorough knowledge of the actual state of your mission could not fail to evoke the pious solicitude and generous assistance of your brethren in Europe, and I therefore decided on writing a journal of the five years' missionary life which I spent in Texas and Mexico.

Permit me, my Lord, to inscribe your venerable name at the head of this work.

Accept the assurance of profound respect with which I have the honour to be, my Lord,

Your most humble and most obedient servant,

EM. DOMENECH,
Missionary Priest.

Paris: March, 1857.

PREFACE.

It was never my intention to give publicity to the secret reminiscences of my missionary career. I love retirement, and a natural timidity of attracting public notice withheld me from publishing the ideas and feelings which accompanied me in all my wanderings over the boundless prairies of the new world, through its primeval forests, under the thatched roof of the emigrant's hut, and in the cabin of the Mexican. I was very young when I devoted myself to the Church militant of the missions, and I was well aware that impressions must have naturally crowded upon me at that time and assumed the character of circumstances which varied every day. Besides, I dreaded the opinions of those who measure men and things by the narrow rule of their own habits and prejudices, and who, therefore, form a very inaccurate notion of missions and missionaries, never reflecting on their own arbitrary mode of viewing and judging, and seeming to forget that at Rome we should live as do the Romans, and that the most savage countries have their own usages, to which we must accommodate ourselves a little, whilst we

strive, at the same time, either to modify them somewhat, or uproot them altogether. But in Paris, I had occasion to meet some of the leading men in literature and science, who pressed me to relate the story of my wanderings in Texas and Mexico; they listened to the recital with a degree of interest which I dared not presume it merited, and pressed me to publish it in all its naïve simplicity. In the hope that the publication might prove useful to the foreign missions, I yielded at length to their kind solicitations.

I felt that, notwithstanding the interesting letters of missionaries which appear in *The Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*, the life of priests who consecrate themselves to the work of propagating the gospel, and introducing the blessings of civilisation among people steeped in barbarism and ignorance, is neither known nor adequately appreciated in Europe. The missionaries, notwithstanding prodigious efforts of industry, devotedness, and courage, die amid the ice of the North, or on the sands of the desert, after having exhausted their strength in labouring for the moral, religious, and physical well-being of their fellow men, and this whilst their countrymen at home make no effectual efforts to aid them in this noble work, which causes the name of France to be blessed by every people and in every tongue; for it cannot be denied that, although the work of the missions is universal and catholic above all, yet still it is pre-eminently French, and that nine-tenths of the missionary priests are Frenchmen.

Pious people will ask, no doubt, are not the sums of money distributed through the missions by the Propa-

gation of the Faith sufficient? I answer no; they are but the grain of mustard seed which grows into a great tree; whereas if the sums were proportionate to the greatness of the work, they would produce the most important and the most abundant results, and the life of the missionary would no longer be a continual struggle with the numberless imperative necessities which undermine his health in a short time, and which oblige him to exhaust, in providing for the commonest necessities of life, those energies which are barely sufficient to enable him to educate the people to whom he breaks the bread of life.

In the first part of my journal, I have particularly in view to portray the missionary's private life, his internal struggles, his physical and moral sufferings. I do little more than notice in passing a variety of other subjects, which have but an indirect relation to his chequered and perilous existence.

In the second part I confine myself to a description of the manners, customs, and peculiar habits of the American and Mexican populations that live on both banks of the Rio Grande. But although I limit myself to personal observation and to facts which occurred around me, still these observations and facts apply with equal force not only to all the new States of the American Union, but also to its central and western possessions.

I cherish a fond hope that in my book will be discovered the impartial spirit of a man who recounts only what he has seen, heard, and felt, and that it will, on this account, attract the approving notice of all who

relish the inelaborate recitals of truth. Like the violet, it possesses no other charm than the sweet perfume of truth—it may be too, that like the early spring flower its duration will be ephemeral; but of what consequence to a secluded and suffering being is the glory of the world! No regret will accompany me into the calm of retirement should I only succeed in awaking in some generous souls a sentiment of pity and charity for those destitute Christian missions to which I have sacrificed the best years of my life—a sentiment which cannot in its nature be sterile, but must on the contrary be productive of the most abundant fruits, which will be no less delicious to the giver than to the receiver.

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JOURNAL

KEPT IN

TEXAS AND MEXICO.

FIRST JOURNEY.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEPARTURE. — A MASS ON BOARD. — REVERIE. — THE MISSISSIPPI. — TEXAS. — ITS INHABITANTS. — VARIOUS FORMS OF WORSHIP. — HISTORY. — GALVESTON. — HOUSTON. — POSTING. — EPISODES OF THE EXCURSION. — THE PRAIRIE. — THE PANTHER. — A STORM. — A MUTINY. — THE ELECTORS AND THE VIOLINIST. — ARRIVAL AT SAN ANTONIO DE BEXAR. — A FRENCHMAN.

TOWARDS the end of 1845, Dr. Odin, Vicar-apostolic of Texas, came to Lyons in search of missionary priests to minister to the spiritual wants of the rapidly-increasing colonies of Europeans which were then settling down in his diocese, and of the American and Mexican settlements of that vast region.

The good bishop spoke with the glowing eloquence of the heart of those distant countries, and of the hosts of emigrants scattered through those solitudes, who would be doomed to pass their lives destitute of the aid and blessings of religion, if some zealous priests did not re-

solve to follow them through these mountains, forests, and plains.

The pious prelate did not conceal from those who offered to accompany him the dangers and hardships, the sufferings and adventures of all sorts, which awaited the missionary in those countries. "You will not always have," said he, "wherewith to satisfy the calls of hunger and thirst. Your journeyings will be incessant, through a country as yet but little known, and boundless in its extent. You will pass nights on the damp ground, and entire days exposed to a burning sun. Perils of every kind you will encounter, which will try your courage and energy at every step."

I was not quite twenty years of age at the time, nor had I entirely completed my ecclesiastical studies; still, feeling myself urged forward by some invisible hand towards this unknown future of trials and sacrifices, I offered the Bishop of Texas my services, which were accepted.

On the 20th of March, 1846, the "Elizabeth Ellen," a beautiful American frigate, left the port of Havre for New Orleans, conveying to the latter city a large number of German emigrants and a few missionaries, myself among the number. The bishop had come to Havre to be present at our departure, and from the jetty gave us the episcopal benediction, which we all, on bended knees, received with deep feelings of reverence. Many a silent tear was shed as we bade farewell to our beloved country, for we felt that this perhaps would be a parting for ever; and it is not to every man that such strength is given as will enable him, unmoved and unaffected, to sever all family ties and affections, to separate himself at once and for ever from friends and

kinsmen, and suddenly to renounce all his old habits and predilections.

It was impossible to remain long on deck. The sea was agitated, the wind howled through the rigging, the storm raged around us, and sea-sickness — that most prosaic of all maladies — drove us to our cabins long before the French coast had disappeared from our sight. The storm obliged us to put in at Portsmouth; but we started again on our journey with little delay, and in fifteen days afterwards we were in the tropics.

During the voyage we had three deaths, three baptisms, and a marriage. But the most impressive ceremony was a solemn high mass chanted on deck, on the first Sunday after Easter. The sky was without a cloud, the sea calm and unruffled. We erected our altar on the ship's poop, and, thanks to the offerings of the French ladies, our little chapel was as beautiful and graceful as a *reposoir* on the *Fête-Dieu*. Nearly all the passengers, on bended knees, and with deepest feelings of reverence, assisted at the celebration of the Divine mysteries.

How ineffable are the sentiments and feelings, the crowding of heavenward thoughts and sweet consolations, which are evoked by the celebration of the Divine mysteries on the open sea! Everything in the grand spectacle makes its way to the soul — the immensity of the heavens, the vastness of the ocean, the light breeze which plays through the rigging, the tiny waves which rise and fall without ceasing, the ambient air filled with sweet voices and mysterious murmurings,— all proclaiming harmony and grandeur eternal,— *Vox Domini super aquas*. It is God's own eloquence speaking to the heart of man.

During the evening of that bright day I lay in my berth at the stern of the ship contemplating the thousands of stars which shone above me. The silence of the night was only broken by the heavy, measured footfall of the officer of the watch; and, as I gave way to reveries of a sad and mysterious charm, the past unfolded itself before me with all the trials that beset man's path in his pilgrimage through life. The future was as an horizon upon which brooded clouds and tempests. It seemed to me as though I had already suffered much. I, a youth of only twenty years, seemed to have arrived at that stage of life in which all the bounding joys of the heart die away, one after the other, in which hope has fled before us, and betaken herself to heaven, that happy land which draws alike to itself our last gaze and our fondest aspiration. It seemed as though I lacked time to accomplish the good which I had projected; and, feeling that I was between this human life and life immortal, as between sea and sky, I fell asleep, rocked by the waves and my own imagination.

On the 11th of May, we came in sight of San Domingo, and for two days we coasted along its shores. Then along the shores of Cuba, diffusing the delicious odour of its orange groves. Then we had a passing glimpse of Jamaica. At length on the 24th the Mississippi came full in view.

A steam-tug met us here to tow us up this celebrated river. Its waters are muddy; its banks flat, monotonous and half submerged towards the Gulf of Mexico, stretch along the horizon in endless prairies, with nothing to vary the dreary landscape, save here and there a clump of sallow trees; and a mortal *ennui* would devour you, but for an occasional alligator, which,

enjoying the luxuries of a bath, shows you, ever and anon, his prickly back. As you approach New Orleans, however, you see the tasteful residences of the planters, built on piles, and constructed of wooden planks and bricks. They are all of snowy whiteness, and surrounded by gardens of orange trees, altheas, and tropical flowers. Hard by the planters' residences are ranged the cabins of the negroes. Plantations of sugar-cane and maize extend on both sides of the river. These are bounded in the distance by the Pine Woods and Virgin Forests.

New Orleans is merely a city of trade and commerce, and presents few objects of attraction to the traveller. We made but a short stay here, and embarked again on board a steamer to ascend the river as far as St. Louis in the State of Missouri. Twelve hundred miles of the Mississippi were yet before me. Again appears the same flat country, lower than the river's level, and protected, by dint of labour, against its waters by ill-constructed earthen embankments. The forests have been cut down, and on the clearings grow maize, the cotton tree, and the sugar-cane. Here and there, half concealed by trees and flowers, are seen the trim houses of the planters; sometimes, too, a low hill, on which is built a town or village, varies the scenery, but it is of rare occurrence, and affords little relief from the endless monotony.

After passing Natchez, about four hundred miles above the river's mouth, you arrive at the Virgin Forests. Gradually approaching the Mississippi, they at length reach the water's edge, and extend along its banks to the mouth of the Ohio, seven hundred miles above Natchez. There the true Mississippi is seen in

all its grandeur. The catalpa, the cotton tree, the willow, the sallow tree, the oak, the sycamore, and the plane tree unite their branches and blend and harmonise their colours; but their dark green foliage is ill-reflected in the yellow waters of the river. The bed of the Mississippi is immense. Sometimes, however, it is divided by woody islands, which impart to it a more cheering aspect. Often, too, large plantations of young trees, sprung from seed which the wind has scattered, display their blooming summits at different elevations, and form, as it were, gigantic banks of luxurious vegetation. The silence of these deep solitudes, which have not as yet felt man's destructive hand, is only broken by the measured stroke of the steam engine, the clang of the bell of the watch, and the monotonous chant of the man heaving the lead. But the sounds are lost in space, for these wilds, old as the world itself, disdainfully refuse to send back any echo. No chattering of monkeys here, no chirping of birds; for, let travellers say what they please, the United States possess neither parrots nor monkeys, except in cages; and, indeed, singing birds are rare even in the primæval forests. Just as you begin to be as weary of these immense forests as you were before of the boundless plains, you arrive at Cairo, a town consisting of two houses and a bridge of boats. The Americans readily give the name of town to the spot on which they intend to build one; and this intention is so closely followed by its realisation that it may be fairly announced beforehand as a fact.

From Cairo to St. Louis is a distance of two hundred miles. The banks of the river are elevated, picturesque, and in a high state of culture. It is a commercial

country, and lead is found in abundance on the Missouri side. From St. Louis the caravans set out for Santa-Fé, in New Mexico; also the Trappers, so celebrated in American novels. From St. Louis, too, go forth the intrepid hunters who run down their rich-furred game in the vast prairies of the West, and even to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, where Indians are met with more frequently than peltries, and enemies in greater numbers than animals of the chase. St. Louis is a large city, and, like all American towns, its streets run at right angles to each other. Its pretty buildings, surrounded by gardens, have won for it the surname of *Queen of the West.* The environs, though well wooded, are somewhat monotonous. The climate is intensely hot in summer, but so cold in winter that at night I shivered with cold, notwithstanding my four blankets and buffalo hide, whose shaggy surface, moistened by my breath, was frozen into icicles. I must confess that I was a little disappointed. Later, indeed, my first impression has been but little modified by my travels in the North and East. Nature in America presents nothing new to the eye of the European traveller, even in the vegetable world. Nowhere in the Western hemisphere is she so picturesque as in Switzerland and the Pyrenees, so gay and charming as in Tuscany, the Romagna, and the two Sicilies, or so rich and varied as in Lombardy and France: her peculiar characteristic is vastness; her rivers, forests, and woods are stupendous in their proportions, and above all in superficial extent.

I remained two years in the Ecclesiastical College of St. Louis to finish my studies, and prepare for the apostolic life of the missions. At the end of that time, in May 1848, I descended the Mississippi to New

Orleans, where I got on board the steamer for Galveston, the principal port of Texas, and the episcopal residence of this vast region. The passage is generally performed in two days, although the distance from the one city to the other is nearly five hundred miles. The Gulf of Mexico is subject to storms and tempests which render this trip very dangerous; and the greater number of steamers on this line have been lost, either by being dashed to pieces by the waves, or run aground on the oyster banks.

When we reached the mouth of the Mississippi, no breeze ruffled the sea, yet it was heaving under the influence of some invisible power; and in its sweeping undulations were reflected the sombre, blood-red tints of the sun which was setting behind mountains of murky vapour. Here and there the heavens were overcast by enormous masses of clouds of crimson hue, the air was heavy and oppressive, and the waters of the ocean bore some resemblance to dark-brown, coagulated oil. A tempest was at hand. It came at last, and breaking over us with terrific violence, continued to rage with unabated fury till next morning at daybreak.

On the morning of our arrival at Galveston, a swallow, which had been surprised by the last evening's tempest, took refuge in our ship. As soon as it made its appearance, the passengers vied with each other in their efforts to catch it. The poor bird, exhausted with fatigue, alighted on one of the ropes near me. I caught it without difficulty, caressed it, and as it was wet and trembling, warmed it in my bosom. The little creature's courage appeared to revive; and I fancied that it was pleased with my attention, as it manifested no desire to escape. Arrived at Galveston, and apprehensive lest I might not succeed in preserving its life, I gave it its liberty, with

some regret. A regret which seemed to be participated in by the poor bird, which was quite unwilling to leave me. Although not naturally superstitious, yet in this simple incident I searched for some augury, which, however, my sterile imagination failed to suggest.

Texas is an Indian word which signifies "a hunting ground abounding in game." Its superficial extent is about 120,000 square miles. It is bounded on the south by the Gulf of Mexico, on the east by the Sabina, which separates it from Louisiana, on the north by the Red River, the Arkansas, and the Indian Territory, on the north-west by New Mexico, and on the west by the Rio Grande, also called Rio del Norte or Rio Bravo. The inhabitants of this country increase so rapidly that it is impossible to state their exact number. In 1848, the population was estimated at 400,000, independently of Indians, who have never suffered the census to be taken in their tribes. I am inclined, however, to think that this number is an exaggeration. The Mexicans were then the most numerous, notwithstanding all that compilers of statistics have stated to the contrary; next the Anglo-Americans, and then the Germans.

The number of black slaves who work in the plantations is very considerable. Texas is divided into 117 counties, including the three counties of Bexar, the two of Bosque, and the two of San Patricio, each of which has a capital or chief town. The majority of their capitals scarcely merit the name of village. The principal rivers are: on the west, the Rio Grande, which is navigable for more than 200 miles, the Nueces, the Rio Frio, and the San Antonio; in the centre of the country, the Colorado and the Brazos; on the east, the Trinity, the Meches, and the Sabina; and on the north the Red River. Most

of these rivers are navigable only at their mouths. They receive innumerable tributaries, which irrigate and fertilise immense prairies. The bays of Galveston and Matagorda abound with fish. In the bay of Matagorda tortoises are found weighing more than 330 lbs., also sword fish measuring more than two yards in length, and sharks in abundance. The entire coast of Texas is formed of hills of fine white sand, of slight elevation; between it and the sea is a line of long narrow islands and oyster banks, against which the waves lash themselves into foam. These islands are frequented by myriads of sea fowl, and especially by pelicans, some of which attain an enormous size.

All the southern part of Texas extends to the sea in sandy plains and swamps, which, as they ascend towards the north, become more elevated, fertile, and undulating; and are clothed with a rich herbage which supports vast herds of cattle, sheep, and horses. The mountains appear only in the north-west, as the advance sentinels of the Andes and the Rocky Mountains. The prairies are divided by forests which extend along the rivers. The most common trees are the cedar, the magnolia, the sycamore, the ebony, the mesquita, the sugar maple, the fir tree, the pacane, many varieties of the acacia, oaks, and palm trees, and others indigenous to hot climates. The cotton of Texas is superior to that of Louisiana. It is principally cultivated on the banks of the Brazos. The tobacco of Nacogdoches is said to be better than that of the United States. Maize grows everywhere, and the produce of the sugar-cane is more abundant than in Louisiana. The flora, though not rich, is varied. The nopal and all the many varieties of the cactus flourish here in abundance. Few discoveries have been made in

mineralogy, and metallurgy is imperfectly understood. Silver, iron, and antimony, however, have been found in the country. The climate is very hot; but it is tempered by regular breezes which come from the Gulf of Mexico, or down from the mountains.

The forms of religious worship in Texas are many. The Mexicans and Indo-Mexicans are Catholics; for want of proper instruction, however, the religion of the great majority is very superficial, the great truths of the faith are overlooked, and the most essential duties of a Christian neglected. They greatly need enlightened guides to direct their steps to the pure light of true Christianity, and would be readily led by them; for, in all matters appertaining to religion they are sincere, childlike in simplicity, and lend a docile ear to the teachings of the priest. The Creoles, also, who are not a numerous body in Texas, profess the Catholic faith. Among the Anglo-Americans, methodism and presbyterianism prevail. Episcopalians, baptists, quakers, and anabaptists are not at all numerous; and the mormons have but one establishment in the north-east. As to the Indians, the religion varies with the tribe; and it is not easy to furnish correct details, as the only information we have respecting their religious worship comes to us from prisoners who have escaped, and in them implicit faith should not be placed. The Comanches worship the Sun and the Light, are very superstitious, and their priests or prophets give them amulets which preserve them, as they say, from every danger from man and beast. Their priests are physicians, and employ the simplest and most effectual means of becoming prophets. During the night, wrapped in long white dresses, they run on foot, or fly on horseback across the prairies, to recon-

noitre the moving caravans, with a view of ascertaining the direction they take, and of counting the number of travellers. In the day time, disguised in a thousand different ways, they penetrate into towns and cities to spy about, and take observations. On their return, they deliver in the most solemn manner, as the revelations of the Spirit, certain indications which experience subsequently proves to be correct. The other Indians supplicate the Great Spirit, whom they place in heaven, whence he extends his protection to them. All they ask is, that he would send them great success in the chase, and rich booty in pillage.

The stationary tribes do not bury their dead, but heap branches of trees and earth on the bodies to protect them from wolves and other wild animals. The bodies are heaped promiscuously one over the other, so that, should the tribe remain for any considerable time in the same place, the pile assumes the form of mounds or hillocks of dead, which the whites call *an Indian Mount.* The Lipans, on the contrary, and other wandering tribes, bury their dead here and there in trenches, generally in the depths of the woods and thickets. They conceal the body under alternate layers of earth and branches, then cover the grave with greensward, and over it interlace the boughs of trees in the most graceful manner, thus forming a kind of rustic vault, which serves to shelter and protect the lonely tomb. Notwithstanding the minute historical researches I have instituted, with a view of discovering the origin of the first inhabitants of Texas, and the first European establishments in these countries, I have failed in collecting any exact information as to events which occurred prior to the seventeenth century.

Historians are either entirely silent as to the *points de départ*, the degrees and the distance, or dismiss the subject with a few vague and unsatisfactory indications. The name of the country, as well as the name of its tribes and rivers, has been changed. At the beginning of the Christian era, a colony of Fultecs seems to have settled on the banks of the Rio-Grande. Historians have often made mention of this powerful tribe; but without any authority whatever, for it left no other trace of its existence than a vague tradition. The Toltecs, before their emigration into Mexico in the seventeenth century, had inhabited the north-western part of Texas, between the Rio-Grande, the Red River, and the southern portion of New Mexico. This tribe, the most ancient of all those of which we have any knowledge, subjected Mexico to its laws, and had some idea of the sciences and the useful arts. The spirit of their laws was mild, their customs characterised by benevolence, their religion an imperfect imitation of Catholicism. They cultivated maize, and knew the use of chocolate; and cacao nuts served them as money. There can be no doubt that that part of Texas which is so much frequented at the present day by the Comanches, and more particularly the banks of the Colorado, was peopled by the Aztecs at the beginning of the twelfth century, that is, before one of their chiefs, called Huitziton, led them to the conquest of Mexico. This was a work of no small labour, and was not accomplished until towards the middle of the thirteenth century. At that epoch the Aztecs completely destroyed the work of the Toltecs, extended their empire, and instituted the sacrificing of human victims, which increased so fearfully during the sixteenth century.

This mighty empire fell, as all know, in 1521, with Quauhtemozin, their last monarch. There is no resemblance whatever between the Aztecs, a brave, spirited race of men, tall, well proportioned and vigorous, and the two pretended Aztecs, who were lately exhibited in Europe; nor have they anything in common with the brave adversaries of Fernando Cortes, save the name, which has been given them without any historic grounds. I am disposed to believe that if the pure Aztec blood exists at the present day, it runs in the veins of the Comanches. The Aztecs were idolaters. They adored no living creature, as some historians state: the objects of their worship were various idols. The Otonites were a great and widely-spread nation in the sixteenth century. They inhabited a large territory, which stretches along the borders of the Gulf of Mexico, and extends far inland from the province of Panuco to Nueces. The Otonites were idolaters, and rose frequently in arms against their Mexican conquerors. There is a hiatus, both in history and tradition, after the emigration of these great tribes, which no research has been able to supply. The wandering tribes gradually overspread these deserted regions. Intestine broils, and the custom of massacring prisoners, by degrees swept multitudes of these minor nations from the face of the earth. Then came the Spaniards, who, during the first years of their conquest, destroyed many millions of Indians by fire and sword. The most thickly-inhabited countries suffered most in this thirst for carnage, which we should regard as fabulous, had not its truth been guaranteed by the authority of the most distinguished historian of the sixteenth century. In the history of Las Casas, which was

published, despite the command of Philip II., we read that during the first twelve years of the invasion "the Spaniards devastated by fire, sword, and lance, 450 leagues of country, massacring men, women, and children."

Before the year 1525, Sebastian Cabot explored the Texian coasts, but did not penetrate into the interior of the country. The first of all the Spanish navigators who made an incursion into Texas, is another and no less celebrated adventurer, Stephen Gomez, who set out from Florida at the commencement of the year 1524, and sailed along the coasts north of the Gulf of Mexico, with a view to the discovery of a strait which might afford him a passage to the Pacific. Disappointed in his expectation, he landed on the San-Antonio side, and carried on board his ship some Indians, whom he had captured on these coasts. At a later period, in 1527, the famous Pamfila de Narvaez being made *adelantado*, or governor, landed at the mouth of the Las Palmas, in the province of Panuco, near Tampico. He had with him nine ships, six hundred Spaniards, one hundred horses, and an abundant stock of provisions. He then shaped his course towards Texas proper, with the intention of conquering and peopling it. But this expedition failed.

The Spaniards divided themselves into two parties, one of which followed the sea-coast in their march northward; three hundred others explored the Costa-Deserta, on the left bank of the Rio-Grande. The latter suffered so much from sickness, and the severity of the climate, that a few survivors, with great difficulty, reached the ships again. "These," says the Chronicle, "were scattered here and there, naked and famished with hunger, for the space of nine years, wandering

through cities and plains, where they cured many Indians of fever, and some too who were lame and wounded." The historians of the sixteenth century relate that, about this epoch (they fix no date), a certain doctor, Gonzales Jimenes, crossed the Rio-Grande and arrived at Santa Fé, where he received from the king a present of some very large emeralds; this induced him to set out in search of mines of these precious stones. He traversed an arid region covered with stones, and inhabited by a miserable race called Pances. These Pances, like the Carribees, poisoned their arrows with the juice of an herb, and their wives followed them to battle, carrying with them their little idols as protectors. It is probable that the Rio-Grande of which mention is made here, was not the Rio-Grande of Texas, and that this Santa Fé was not the capital of New Mexico, for the Spaniards had not as yet penetrated so far northward; nor is any mine of emeralds found in these countries. Besides, this Doctor Jimenes had been the lieutenant and friend of Don Pedro de Lugo, adelantado of New Granada; it must have been to Santa Fé de Bogotá that he repaired, in ascending the Oronoco, or rather the Magdelena, which passes near Santa Fé.

So early as the sixteenth century a marked difference was observed between the Indians of Texas and those of the other parts of the West Indies, as regards manners and customs. The tribes of Texas became more and more nomad; they built no towns as their ancestors did, and worshipped the Sun, Moon, and Elements, rather than idols. The Indians of Mexico, and of almost all the West Indies, went naked, and rarely wore ornaments of feathers or of tissue; married women wore a girdle of the bark of trees ingeniously wrought, while young

unmarried females wore cinctures of goat or deer skin. In Texas, on the contrary, men and women were clothed in painted and speckled kid-skins, so fine in quality and so perfumed that the Spaniards were lost in amazement at beholding them. The cloak was wrought of the fibre of the agavo, and the hat was very ample in its proportions; but this latter article of dress was not in general use. Marriage ceremonies in Texas also differed widely from those of Mexico. In Texas the bride was borne on the back of a woman escorted by four matrons, before sunrise, to the threshold of the bridegroom. Here the latter received her, conducted her into his cabin, placed her on a mat spread on the ground, and took his place opposite her. The couple were then fastened together by the skirts of their dresses, in the presence of two old men and two matrons, who taking their seats at different sides attended the ceremony as witnesses. Noma Nopal wood was burned in honour of their divinities. The bride and bridegroom then supped together, and afterwards the guests. Supper over, their dresses were untied, and the laws of marriage propounded to them. In the provinces of Panuco and Acapulco these ceremonies were accompanied, in accordance with extravagant customs, with sacrifices to Tealloc, the god of waters, and to Ometochtli, god of wine.

The Spaniards had no establishment in Texas until the end of the seventeenth century; but a Frenchman, De la Sale, was the first to settle down there. This intrepid navigator, who for the love of science and the glory of his country twice crossed the North American continent, undertook a third voyage with a view of discovering the mouth of the Mississippi, then called

the Colbert. He sailed from La Rochelle on the 24th of July, 1684, in a ship of war of forty guns, accompanied by three other vessels, with two hundred and eighty souls on board, including crews, soldiers, and workmen, to form settlements. After encountering many hardships in every shape, he arrived on the 10th of January, 1685, at the mouth of the Mississippi, which, however, he did not recognise. He then beat about until March of the same year, and cast anchor in the Bay of Matagora, to which he gave the name of St. Louis. With trees, and the wreck of one of his vessels which had grounded, he built a fort on the south of the County of Calhoun, between the Bays of Matagora and Espiritu-Santo. To this settlement he gave the same name as the bay, in honour of Louis XIV., the then reigning monarch. The following year, De la Sale made an incursion into the interior of the country, and crossed the Colorado. This river, which the Spaniards called Rio de Oro, he named la Madeleine. From the circumstance of his servant being carried off by a crocodile in crossing the Guadalupe, a river also unknown to him, he called it la Maline. He also passed over the San Antonio, to which he gave the name la Sablonnière. During this journey he fell in with many tribes of Indians, who exercised towards him all the rights of hospitality, and made exchanges of wares with him. The country appearing to him admirably adapted for the establishment of an important settlement, he returned to Fort St. Louis, and made a second excursion with his followers at the commencement of the next year; but by the haughty bearing of their commander and the fatigues of the journey, the dark passions of his people were excited against him, and he perished by their hands on the 19th of March, 1687.

The Indians by this time had modified their manners, customs, and usages, although these modifications could not have been very considerable. Many tribes were extinct, or had changed their names by incorporation with other tribes: and at the present day there exists no trace of the Nachitos, the Natsohos, the Cenis, the Tecamenes, the Meghai, the Omeaossé, and many other nations, save the funereal mounds where their bones repose in the deep silence of oblivion.

In 1698, the garrison of San Antonio de Bexar was founded, in all probability, by the *adelantado* of the province of Monterey. Bahia, near Soliad, was established in 1716. The settlement of Nacogdoches, on the frontiers of Louisiana, does not date further back than the year 1732. The precise period at which the Spanish establishments or missions of San José, Concepcion, San Saba, Victoria, and Refugio were founded, is not well ascertained; still I think the date is more recent than those just mentioned. The missions may have been originally *Haciendas*, or at least constructed on their models. These *haciendas*, a species of fief or fortified inclosed domain, within whose precincts there was also a chapel or church, were founded by the Spanish conquerors. The Indians, who by right of conquest became vassals, had their huts outside the *haciendas*, and built against the walls. At a later period, when the missions contained prisoners of war, with whose education the Spanish monks were specially charged, the Indian habitations were brought within the walls. After the death of the conquerors, the greater part of the *haciendas* were abandoned, and the labour of the Indians being emancipated by virtue of new and protecting laws, these fiefs became the pro-

perty of the Crown of Spain and were ceded to the Church. The modern history of Texas may be related in a few lines. It was at Galveston that, in 1817, General Lallemand purposed establishing the *Champ d'Asile.* In 1820, the Spanish government accorded great privileges to an American, named Moses Austin, on condition that he should introduce emigrants into the country and till the soil. Moses died before he was able to fulfil his promise, but his son Stephen arrived with the first body of emigrants in 1821. At this date was promulgated the *Plan de Iguala*, which caused a separation between the mother country and Mexico; and the crown was transferred to the brow of the Creole general, Augustine Iturbide, who caused himself to be proclaimed emperor. In 1824 the empire became a republic; new laws favoured the colonisation of Texas, and this province was united to that of Cohahuila. But the inhabitants of Cohahuila, jealous of the prosperity and favour which the Texians enjoyed, allowed no opportunity to pass without involving them in quarrels and disputes; and in 1830 the American colonists, who numbered 30,000, demanded a separation. The Mexican government, on its side, had it in contemplation to fall back on the protecting laws of 1824. In this emergency Stephen Austin set out in 1833 for Mexico, to plead the cause of his colony; but having failed in his projects, advised his friends to withdraw from Cohahuila. He returned to Texas, but was arrested in February, 1834, and thrown into prison for five months. This act aroused the indignation of the Texians to such a degree that they resolved on proclaiming not merely the separation of Texas from Mexico, but the independence of the former territory. The revolution, effected by Santa

Anna in 1835, furnished them with a favourable opportunity, of which they were not slow to avail themselves. On his appointment to the presidency, Santa Anna dismissed the federal authorities, abolished the independence of the confederated states, and declared them provinces of the Central Mexican Republic. The legislators of the different states were constrained to yield in presence of a greater force: Texas alone dared to offer resistance. Santa Anna moved towards Texas to crush the opposition; the Texians replied to his menaces by an appeal to arms, and hostilities commenced in September, 1835. On the 11th of December of the same year was fought the battle which gave San Antonio de Bexar to the Texians. In the month of February of the following year, Santa Anna entered Texas at the head of 6000 or 8000 men, and after many successes, he was at last completely defeated and made prisoner in a desperate engagement, which was fought on the 21st of April, 1835, on the banks of the San Jacinto. The independence of Texas was the result of this memorable battle; and Santa Anna was set at liberty. General Houston was elected president of the new republic, which was as yet too weak and too impoverished to maintain its independence for any considerable time between two neighbours so powerful and so jealous of each other. In 1845, Texas ceased to be independent, and became incorporated with the United States. The following year, Mexico and the United States quarrelled with respect to the fixation of the Texian boundary. War was declared, and commenced on the banks of the Rio-Grande, but was brought to a close in Mexico. Peace was signed in 1848, and the frontiers fixed by the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Since that time emigration from

Europe and America to Texas has assumed vast proportions. Important grants of land have been made to the German colonists, to the soldiers who fought in both wars, and to all those who had effected settlements in the country before 1847. Prosperity increases every day; and the commercial intercourse between the United States and Mexico constitutes a new source of wealth to the latter country.

Galveston is built on the north of a long, narrow sandy island, which bears its name. The whole country round is covered with a fine white sand, in which you sink up to the knees at every step. The earth, scorched by the sun during the day, heats the air to an intense degree, and renders a sojourn at Galveston insupportable. The musquitos are in such myriads, and so troublesome, that it is difficult for a stranger to live there in summer. The water is detestable; and the inhabitants are obliged to collect rain water in tanks constructed either of wood or brick. Here the water is kept seething, exposed to the sun's heat; and if you take into account that the cisterns are not always of the cleanest, you may be able to form some idea of its quality. They are obliged to bring earth from the mainland to have a little vegetation; but this earth is so fertile, that mixed with sand it produces good fruit and excellent vegetables. The houses in general are constructed of wood, and surrounded by small gardens. Along the streets, on each side, are planted odoriferous trees, and rose laurels, perpetually in bloom, and filling the air with their perfumes. At Galveston, as in many other towns of the slave states, I observed that masters give full liberty to their negroes on Sunday. One day in seven is not much;

still in a Southern State it is a great deal. On Sunday, therefore, the poor negroes endeavour to compensate for the six days of toil and servitude, and accordingly indulge in their two favourite amusements of promenading and dancing. Often, too, they yoke their masters' horses to cars and tilburies, and gallop along the beach, making the air resound with their songs and shouts of revelry, not waiting until the decline of the day has somewhat mitigated the heat of the sun.

The episcopal residence is composed of three wretched huts containing seven or eight small rooms surrounded by galleries, shaded by fig trees, rose laurels, grenades, and citrons. In the evening a few of his flock used to visit the bishop, and grouped under a gallery; we listened to the recital of his travels, labours, and to the expressions of his hopes and fears for the future of the mission and its wants. To us these were the most agreeable hours of the day. When I first arrived at Galveston, the beautiful cathedral was not quite finished, and Divine worship was celebrated in a small wooden chapel with scarcely room enough to contain the congregation. The heat was insupportable, and on wet days the rain came through the roof. One Sunday, during Dr. Odin's sermon, the rain fell in torrents, and finding its way through the chinks came down in drops on the congregation, who were obliged to open their umbrellas in the church; as for myself, who had no contrivance of the kind, I received for a good half-hour a shower-bath of tepid water. Nevertheless wet days are full of charm in this country, and one looks back to them with regret when the fiery heats come on. The heat increasing more and more in intensity, the good bishop,

apprehensive lest a residence at Galveston in summer would be prejudicial to my health, advised me to go to San Antonio de Bexar, in the interior of Texas. As my greatest desire was to rejoin one of my countrymen, the Abbé Dubuis, whose principal residence was at Castroville, and as Castroville is only thirty miles or so from San Antonio, I embraced with joy the bishop's proposition. Accordingly I embarked on board a steamboat which was to bring me to Houston, whence I was to proceed on foot to San Antonio.

During the 31st of July, 1848, the sky was a very furnace of fire, and the bay sparkled like a polished mirror. In the distance, a few bushes scattered on islets displayed their grey outline on an horizon raised to a white-heat temperature. Arrived at the extremity of the bay, we entered the little Buffalo river, bordered with reeds and bulrushes, in the midst of which herons, and cranes, and thousands of ducks were disputing. By-and-by the banks increasing in height, approached so near each other, and formed so many narrow and tortuous windings, that at every instant the boat was caught either by the bow or the stern. At length the high lands appeared, covered with magnolias with their large white flowers and delicious perfumes. Grey and red squirrels leaped from branch to branch; while mocking-birds and cardinals imparted life and language to these wonderful solitudes. "What magnificent trees!" cried I, in transport. "Yes," replied one of my companions; "Yes, they would make fine wood for building purposes, I reckon." Indignant at this prosaic reply, I turned round, "Monsieur is no doubt an American?" said I, interrogatively, to my interlocutor. "Yes, sir, I am from Kentucky." The

priest at Houston, a young Frenchman, was one of my travelling companions. We left Lyons together. I proceeded at once to his house. We embraced like dear friends who had not seen each other for an age. Houston is a wretched little town composed of about twenty shops, and a hundred huts, dispersed here and there, among trunks of felled trees. It is infested with methodists and ants. These ants crawl along the streets, and through every room, in endless processions; and the ceiling, the walls, the floor are traversed in every direction by the dark and ever-moving columns of their battalions. The inhabitants, with a view of removing something or other from their untiring search, place small vessels filled with water under the bed-posts, tables, and cupboards. At night I lay in a bed similarly protected, in which, to employ an old French word, I was *insulated*, and slept without molestation in the midst of enemies. The next morning, however, while dressing, I was seized with an itching all over my body, being stung from head to foot. I lost no time in flinging off my clothes. The fact is, I had forgot to place them on my bed, or on a table, or on some inaccessible piece of furniture, and they had been overrun with ants. Having given them a vigorous shake, and put them on again at the risk of bearing away with me some of the hosts which had taken possession of them, I made my escape from this ant-hill. Two hours afterwards I again embraced my fellow countryman, and started *en poste* for San Antonio.

The *poste* is a cart or species of waggon drawn by four powerful horses. I was the only passenger. We set off at a gallop. A bridge, six or seven feet in width, and constructed of two planks and branches of trees

badly joined together, is thrown across betwen the two small hills which confine the channel of the Buffalo. We crossed this bridge at full speed. I was filled with alarm; for the slightest accident would have precipitated us into the river. I had not, however, much time for reflection; for the jumping and jolting of the waggon knocked me about so, and put me in such imminent fear of a capsize, that I laid hold of the vehicle with the desperation of a shipwrecked mariner clinging to a rock despite the waves which dash about and buffet him on all sides. In a short time, however, I relaxed my grasp, bruised and exhausted, and abandoned myself an unresisting victim to the jolts and tossings of the waggon.

The roads in Texas are almost all constructed with a view to great economy, and in the most primitive manner. In the woods, simple notches in the trees indicate the route. If any tree should happen to be too much in the way, they cut it down at about a foot from the ground, with the intention, it would appear, of insuring a jolt here and there. In the prairies and open country there is no marked path; and every one proceeds, according to his taste, along a flat, unbroken surface. The *poste* goes at full speed through the woods, passing over stumps, and striking against trees; in the prairies, on the contrary, where the sun broils you without mercy, it proceeds at a walking pace. Is this done with the view of getting up *impressions* for the travellers, or with some other intent? I know not.

After this desperate careering through the forest, we entered on one of those immense prairies of which I had heard so much. We could not have reached its opposite boundary though we had journeyed all day. In

about an hour we were lost in an ocean of dry, stunted herbage, in which neither bush nor bramble obstructed the view; where there was nothing to mark either beginning or end, and where all around was mute and motionless. I looked in vain for beauty in this scenery; grand, it is true, but of the wild and melancholy grandeur of the desert. My soul was filled with the immensity of the picture, as on the ocean; but the sea has at least the wind and waves to give it life and animation; whereas in these endless solitudes there reigns a sullen silence, which fills the heart with a deep, distressing sense of loneliness. I felt quite uncomfortable in this void, which resembled chaos.

In the evening I descried a little hill in the distance, gilded by the last rays of the sun;—it was the burying place of an Indian tribe — a heap of forgotten graves, bathed in a flood of light. Such was the only monument — the only trace of man's sojourn. Whilst thus lost in the depths of my own reflections, and contemplating the setting sun, my postboy fell asleep, and the horses, left to themselves, came upon a ravine, into which our waggon was thrown as a matter of course, while the charioteer and myself were flung on the opposite bank by the shock.

"Are any of your bones smashed?" said my driver, starting from his sleep.

"No," I replied.

"Good! then there is no harm done."

"No harm done! Why if this mode of travelling continued for four or five days, it is impossible that I should arrive at San Antonio with an unbroken bone in my body."

The night, which in those countries is not preceded

by twilight, came upon us immediately afterwards. However, we had first arrived at a farm-house, where we passed the night.

The crowing of the cock, the lowing of cattle, and the bleating of sheep, cheered and delighted me. I felt as though I had reached some friendly port after a long and wearisome voyage, and was once again in a country with which I was quite familiar. I fancied myself in a French farm-house. After partaking of a good supper, I was shown a bed, oblong in shape, and made of the branches of trees. Over the branches, and by way of substitute for a mattress, was laid a blanket. Having placed my clothes over all, I lay down half-dead with fatigue. Sleep, however, was out of the question, for the sharp ends of the branches pricked my sides; and though I turned and turned again to find some spot whereon to lie at ease, I found it not; and the day broke upon me while thus engaged. But rise I must, for the stage before me was long and toilsome, and beset with danger, as our route lay through the heart of the forest, and bristled with stumps of trees. In addition to this, it conducted us through a low swampy region, infested with wild beasts, and serpents of the larger species. As a matter of precaution, my charioteer provided himself with a hatchet, ropes, a six-barrelled revolver, and a carabine; but as I was entirely without arms myself, I took my seat near the driver, to have a ready protector in case of danger.

Notwithstanding my fears, the pleasure of finding myself once more in forest land and among the trees made me forget all danger; and rarely have I felt happier in my life. Nature seemed to exhaust her store of variety to make some atonement for the distressing mo-

notony of yesterday. First we passed through prairies — which were happily of limited extent. Rivulets murmured on all sides, and our way was bordered with flowers in such profusion, and so thickly matted that scarcely was a stem or leaf discernible in this *mélange* of brilliant colours. A light breeze played through the old oaks which were scattered here and there in this delightful garden of nature's own arrangement. It was in very deed a lovely Eden. At one view the oaks are grouped in clumps, then whole forests of them meet the eye. At length they are interspersed with countless sycamores and plane trees. In a word, we were in a virgin forest — in the America of the poets. Delighted to find myself amid vegetation so luxuriant, all my previous apprehensions were lulled to rest. I was, to say the truth, lost in admiration. But the enchantment was short-lived; for I was soon aroused from it by observing the driver suddenly grasp his carabine, cock it, examine the priming, and then leisurely replace it between his feet. Danger is at hand, it would seem. Still the driver continues to hum his tune, and only breaks off to point out to me the honey-tree and those plants which have the property of curing serpent bites — an infallible remedy! Suddenly the horses stop short, snort wildly, tremble all over, and plunge backwards. In their paroxysm they dash the waggon with violence against the trunk of a tree, and the pole is smashed. My companion alights with his carabine. At the same instant a panther of huge size crouches and springs on the foremost horse. Then a shot is fired, and this formidable denizen of the forest falls to the ground lifeless. As for myself, the shock sent me head over heels to the bottom of the waggon,

whence I witnessed the scene from quite an extraordinary point of view (*à l'envers*). The horse happily received but a few slight scratches, and the pole was soon put to rights by means of ropes. The panther was hoisted into the waggon alongside of me; and after half an hour's delay we were on our way again as though nothing had happened.

In a short time we reached the Brazos, a narrow, shallow river. Its waters are limpid, and trees of prodigious height take root in its bed, stretching out their lordly branches, bower-like, over the current. We crossed the river on a kind of raft, and very soon found ourselves in one of those rich cotton plantations which are so numerous on the banks of the Brazos.

The cotton-trees are covered with white or red flowers, which rise and fall with the undulations of the land. We arrived late in the evening at the farm-house where we were to pass the night. This house, and its dependencies, overhung by oaks, acacias, and maples, are extensive, and bespeak comfort. I slept pretty well during the night, but on the following morning I perceived that the money which I brought with me from Galveston had so diminished that I had not wherewith to meet the expenses of the road to San Antonio. From motives of economy, therefore, I dispensed with breakfast. At this stage a young widow of seventeen entered the waggon with us; but to me her presence brought ill-luck. The morning had hardly dawned, when the air became heavy and smelt of sulphur and charcoal. Suddenly the heavens were overcast, and flashes of lightning succeeded each other so rapidly that the sky seemed wrapt in one vast conflagration. Large lukewarm drops now began to

fall, and presently came down a very deluge which soon penetrated my thin cotton garments and drenched me to the skin. Swollen torrents improvised by the tempest rushed down upon us from all sides. Our vehicle, in a short time, floated, or rather floundered, with difficulty through a lake of liquid mud, while peals of thunder became incessant and terrific, and a few paces from us the earth was riven by the lightning. My companion was dreadfully alarmed; but fear was the only misery she had to endure, as she was enveloped in thick covering, and provided with an umbrella which, like a shower-bath, sent down upon my neck and knees two torrents of ice-cold water. I was half drowned by it. My hands became shrivelled, and of a death-like whiteness, while my teeth chattered, and I shivered from head to foot. Towards one o'clock in the afternoon the storm subsided, and an hour afterwards we arrived at a small town called Independencia. To spare expense I had but a poor dinner, paid exorbitantly for it, and had no time to dry my wet clothes; and the water which was pumping in my shoes once removed, I was obliged to resume my journey. It blew, however, from the north, and I was soon dry again. Our route lay between an oak forest and a prairie enamelled with flowers, now bent and broken by the storm; but it was so cut up by the rains, that it was late at night when we arrived at the inn. Next morning's breakfast cost my last farthing; and as there was still a journey of three days before we should reach San Antonio, the long fast in prospective had no cheering effect on my mind; hence I had little disposition to admire the beauties of the scenery around me, though it was beautiful. Giant trees were encircled by giant vines; one of

the latter being at least fifteen inches in circumference, and in height thirty or forty feet, while it wrapped its stalwart boughs around the summits of the largest sycamores, and stretched them out to a distance of a hundred yards or more.

At noon, as we approached the house where we were to dine, a party of both sexes, in full dress, made their appearance on horseback from all parts of the wood. They were presbyterians on their way to hear a sermon from one of their ministers, whose house was at once a conventicle and an hostelrie. Not having a farthing to pay for dinner, I was strolling about in the worst humour imaginable, when a vehicle, very like our own, containing two persons in black, appeared on the way by which we were about to continue our journey. What was my joy on recognising the Abbé Dubuis, and another fellow countryman from Lyons who had not as yet become a missionary! We threw ourselves into each other's arms, and in turn recounted all our adventures. The Abbé Dubuis expressed his deep regret at the step I had taken; for whilst I was on my way to join him, he had left Castroville, disheartened by the wickedness of the people, who, not satisfied with allowing him to starve, used every effort to destroy his reputation. His fellow labourer in the mission had died at the end of three months of misery, weariness, and pain. I knew not well what to do on hearing this, the more so, as I had not a farthing, and the Abbé had not so much money as would enable me to retrace my steps. Still, although very straitened in means himself, he could give me as much as would support me until I reached San Antonio. I had therefore no alternative; but perplexed and broken-hearted, I was forced to continue

my journey. Before arriving at San Antonio I had to pass through Austin, San Marcos, and Braunfels. The Abbé Dubuis roused my spirits a little by promising me that he would return to his mission if the bishop authorised me to share in its labours.

Austin, the seat of the Texian Legislature, is a small dirty town, and contained only one wretched hotel. Crossing the Colorado in a boat, we witnessed a novel ceremony — the baptism of two old Protestant women. The minister, standing on a plank between two boats, seized the neophytes one after the other, plunged them to their necks in the water, and held them there until he had pronounced the sacramental words. The entire population of Austin was present, and appeared highly amused with this exhibition of a religious bath; but as for the two old women, they appeared in nowise concerned at the presence of such immense crowds of spectators.

At every instant as we went along, the driver pointed out to us the spots where sanguinary conflicts had taken place, either between white men and Indians, or between the Mexicans and the people of Texas. His tales would have filled me with alarm in this wild and desert region, had not a fellow-traveller — a half-tipsy fiddler — diverted my thoughts from the deeds of blood by the jarring sounds of his violin.

The country, as you approach San Marcos, becomes more interesting; the hills, though inconsiderable as yet, are numerous; and some are bare and arid, whilst others are covered with oaks; but as you advance towards the north and north-west, they increase in height and frequency, forming, as it were, the advanced guard of a chain of mountains which you descry in the

distance, and which, in all probability, have never been trodden by human feet, save those of the Indians. The inn of the small village of San Marcos is composed of two huts, constructed of pine wood and straw. What struck me as peculiarly odd, was the fact of there being but two beds in the whole concern—to be sure each was of enormous size. I was informed that one of them was set apart for men, the other for women. Bears are very numerous in this lonely spot; and here, for the first time in my life, I tasted of their flesh, and found it excellent. We met at the inn another passenger for San Antonio. He was a Frenchman, who had come to San Marcos to hunt bears, and was taking back with him two of those animals. Whilst at dinner, we were startled by a deep growling near us. At once the Frenchman seized his double-barrel gun, and left the room without a word. I asked our host what was the matter. "Only a bear," he replied, with the greatest possible composure; but seeing my astonishment, he added: "Oh! no doubt, these animals sometimes commit depredations, but they rarely attack us. As soon as they catch a glimpse of us, they scamper off. It is even said that the farm of a Mr. Mosenbach, on the road as you go to Fredericksburg, is not guarded by dogs, but by tame bears. When one arrives there after sunset" . . . . . The double report of a gun cut short the conversation; and a minute or two afterwards the Frenchman reappeared, and took his place at the table, assuring me that he had certainly wounded the bear, but fearing lest he should lose his place in the waggon, he had refrained from pursuing the animal into the forest. May we not presume that this Frenchman was a Gascon?

Braunfels is an important German colony. We arrived there in the evening. Groups of drunken fellows, shouting and disputing under the double excitement of wine and loud talk, met us at every step. I could not think of spending the night in such company, until some one said to me, "Oh don't mind it—it is an election day; depend upon it there will be more noise than danger." In the room where I was to spend the night were two beds; it was, moreover, full of drunken fellows, smoking, drinking, and discussing politics. The appearance of our friend the musician was greeted with a general hurrah, and the whole party stood up and swore they would have a dance. I profited by the movement to seize on one of the beds; anticipating, however, scenes the duration or result of which it was impossible to divine, I durst not undress; so I awaited the issue, heartily disgusted with politics, fiddle, and wine.

The musician proclaimed aloud that so long as his throat was dry, the instrument would not work, but keep it moistened with something to drink, and the fiddle will go on as long as you please. A new salvo of hurrahs followed this announcement, and the tables were covered in an instant with bottles of wine and brandy. Then came forth from the fiddle, waltzes, and American tunes in screeching notes of merciless discord. The electors jump, and twirl about, and fling themselves into a thousand contortions, shouting the while in a way to smash the tympanum of a deaf man's ear. As luck would have it, a string of the fiddle broke after three hours' uproar. This put an end to music and dancing for the night; and my friends staggered out of the room. In an instant I was undressed, the candle

extinguished, and I was just falling into a sound sleep when something fell heavily upon me. Startled, and half crushed to death, I groped about me, when lo! I laid hold of a coat, some hair, a nose, and a fiddle. It was the musician, who had tumbled into my bed as drunk as an elector. I extricated myself from this avalanche the best way I could, and took refuge in the vacant bed.

San Antonio, the end of our journey, was only thirty miles off. The route lay through a charming country — picturesque and beautifully diversified. Numerous waggons drawn by oxen were taking merchandise to Braunfels, or maize to San Antonio. Every thing bespoke the vicinity of a large town. We arrived at half-past three o'clock, — it was high time, for I was bruised, broken, and thoroughly knocked up by the journey.

CHAP. II.

SAN ANTONIO. — FURNISHED LODGINGS. — MY ORDINATION. — CASTROVILLE. — DOMESTIC SCENES. — RATTLESNAKES. — A CROCODILE HUNT. — THE CHURCH. — THE MISSIONARY. — THE MISSIONS. — FIRST EXCURSION. — A QUIPROQUO.

San Antonio, like the majority of Mexican towns, is remarkable for a large square which occupies its centre. In the middle of this square stands the church with its thick walls, its massive quadrangular steeple, and insignificant cupola raised over the choir. Surrounding the square on all sides are rows of large houses built of stone, whitewashed, with flat roofs and terraces, and windows few in number and very small. Here and there clumps of Chinese lilacs. The streets are straight, but filthy, and encumbered with oxen and waggons, either quite disabled or covered all over with mud. Courtyards or kitchen gardens, where grow, without culture or without the exhibition of any taste as to the planting, lilacs, fig-trees, pomegranates, and peach-trees. At present, in the construction of buildings, stone is beginning to replace bamboos, *adaubes*, or bricks burned in the sun, and cabins built with the branches of trees. At that time the population, which for the most part was Mexican, did not exceed three or four thousand. The dress of the men is picturesque and graceful, although not so rich as in the interior of Mexico. The broad-leafed hat is decorated with silver ornaments; the vest is short, and, when it is of buckskin, the sleeves are open to the elbow, and ornamented

with silver buttons. The pantaloons, too, are garnished with buttons, and open to the hips, but buttoned from the knee upwards. They are of skin, cloth, or blue velvet, bordered with large bands of black velvet. A cincture of blue or red silk, with fringe, completes the costume. The Mexican women are scantily clad, wearing only a chemise with very low front, and a petticoat. When they leave the house, they wear a gown of thin silk, and cover the entire person with a scarf, which hangs about them in the most graceful folds.

San Antonio is situated between the 29th and 30th degree of north latitude, and in the 100th degree of west longitude. Its position, near the north-eastern frontier of Mexico, makes it a place of great importance. It is the principal dépôt for the merchandise of the United States, which is conveyed hence to Monclova, Monterey, Saltillo, Paso del Norte, and even to San Luis de Potosi in the interior of Mexico. Every week arrive, from different localities, long caravans of ponderous waggons with massive wheels, drawn by oxen, and superintended by rich Mexican traders, who come here to lay in a stock of muslins, cottons of all kinds, soap, sugar, flour, and coffee.

The priests who served the mission of San Antonio were Spaniards, and inhabited a large dreary stone house at the western extremity of the square. There being no room for me, I was lodged in the garret, which was divided into two compartments, of which one contained provisions for culinary purposes, onions, garlic, pimento, and vegetables, which were put there to dry. This part, which was very large, served me as a promenade for two months. Here I passed long hours musing a great deal, pacing the length and breadth of

the planks, picking my steps lest I should crush the vegetables, and all the while meditating profoundly on a great variety of subjects.

The other part, which served me as a bed-room, was very small. The furniture consisted of a miserable kind of camp-bed, without either mattress or palliasse, a crazy table, and two chairs, one of which was without a bottom, the other wanted a leg. My sofa was a public coffin, in which the mortal remains of the poor were conveyed to the cemetery; after consigning them to the grave, the coffin returned once more to the garret, ready to perform the same duty again, as often as its services were required. One small window looked out on the road to Mexico, while a dormer skylight window commanded at once a view of the priest's poultry yard and the burial ground. The roof gave free admission to the rain, as also, and, in a very special manner, to the sun's burning rays. Denizens, at all events, were not wanting in my retreat — for dormice, rats, spiders, musquitos, and insects of every denomination, in myriads, lived and broiled there in my society. Close to the house was a stream of clear water, where the washing business of the town was done, and in which the women bathed publicly. My window was in view of all their gambolings; I was, therefore, obliged to keep it closed during the day. I could not take a walk through the town in the day time on account of the heat, nor outside its precincts, for fear of the Indians. The parish priest informed me that for a long time he could not accompany a corpse to the cemetery, which was not more than a pistol shot from his house, without being protected by armed men. Thus I was kept a close prisoner in my garret, hardly able to breathe, unable to study, and dying

of *ennui.* This want of air, exercise, and mental occupation brought on a very singular malady. Fainting fits, which on each occasion lasted for a considerable time, and which came on so suddenly that it was never in my power to call for assistance, seized me once or twice every day. One evening, more than usually oppressed by a host of gloomy thoughts, I sat contemplating from my narrow skylight the graves beneath me, with their rustic crosses and white head-stones scorched in the sun; my ill-defined desires and aspirations were ascending to the throne of the God of all consolation. I dared not complain somehow, and yet I suffered intensely — all at once I heard a coarse voice chant forth in French the following words:—

"Oh! surtout cache-lui
D'où vient mon ennui..."

At a bound I was on my legs, at the aperture of my pigeon-box, to find out who it was that sung thus. I discovered that it was a mason who worked at a neighbouring wall.

"You are a Frenchman?" cried I, deeply affected by the meeting.

"A Frenchman, without a doubt, and a Comtois too, at your service. But who are you, and what in Heaven's name are you doing at that skylight?"

"I, too, am a Frenchman. I am preparing for the mission of Texas. The bishop has sent me here that I might escape the fevers of Galveston; but I have no acquaintance; and I never leave my garret except to go to church; hence the voice of a countryman made me leap for joy."

"At that rate, with no one to speak to, your time must hang heavily enough upon you. If you think well

of it, I'll come and see you after my work, and we'll have a little chat together."

I received the offer with joy. Nevertheless two months after my arrival at San Antonio my strength, both of body and mind, was quite exhausted. My state of mind was such that I conceived the silly project of returning on foot, and without money, to Galveston. At this juncture the bishop arrived, and I received his orders to prepare for my examination previous to my ordination. At first I hesitated. I durst not as yet bind myself by an irrevocable vow to the work of the ministry among a vicious people, with whose language and manners I was totally unacquainted, under a burning sky, amid perils and dangers of all sorts—and that, too, when I had not as yet attained my twenty-third year—that is, at an age when the passions are strongest.

The solemn engagements I was about to contract filled me with terror; and distrusting entirely in my own resolves, I besought Almighty God to vouchsafe me His holy inspirations. At this moment the Abbé Dubuis arrived in San Antonio. The good priest aroused and encouraged me, pointed out to me those multitudes around us who stood in such extreme need of a priest's ministry, and promised to receive me into a participation of all his labours and sacrifices. "In the missions we are obliged to endure all the crosses of life," he was wont to say to me, "the ingratitude of some, the indifference of others; and still the missionary feels himself recompensed a hundred fold when he is able to impart some consolation to these poor people here on earth, and when by his ministry he insures to them a crown hereafter in heaven. Indeed, they more than repay us for all our toils and sacrifices by the hap-

piness we experience in ministering to their wants and necessities." I could resist no longer: and eight days afterwards I was ordained priest. I bethought me, not without deep emotion, of the young clerics in the old country, who, on the occasion of their ordination, are surrounded by relatives and friends, from whom they receive counsel and encouragement. As for myself, I was separated from all I held dear in this world; I was alone, and opening before me was a life of solitude and hardships without end. To me the chalice was a bitter one; but, aided by God's grace, I felt no inward regret. And yet it was one of those days in my existence in which religion should have shed her most benign influence, and imparted to me all her saving counsels; for on that day I offered the sacrifice of my life and of my whole being.

The mission, whose labours I shared with the Abbé Dubuis, comprised the German Catholics, who were dispersed through the towns, settlements, and villages on the north-western boundary of Texas, as also the Irish soldiers who were employed in the American service to repress the incursions of the Indian tribes. The principal points were: Castroville, thirty miles west of San Antonio, and the residence of the Abbé Dubuis, where I subsequently resided; twelve miles farther on, Quihi; then Vandenberg; the colony and camp of Dhanis; and more remote still, another American camp, situate on the river Leona; one hundred miles north of San Antonio, Fredericksburg and the Llano; and to the east, Braunfels, through which I had passed on my way to San Antonio. I had nothing to do with the Mexicans; the only foreign language which I spoke, the Italian, was therefore useless to me. I knew only a word or two of English;

and of German, which was indispensable to me, I was utterly ignorant.

Two days after my ordination I set out for Castroville, accompanied by an Alsacian. Owing to his being detained by business at Braunfels, the Abbé Dubuis was unable to preside at my installation. It was a lovely summer's evening. My travelling companion drove a waggon, laden with merchandise and drawn by oxen. The slow pace at which he proceeded gave me leisure to examine this route, which at a future time I should be obliged to travel so frequently by day and night. Leaving San Antonio behind us, we entered a *chaparal*, or coppice-wood, of two miles in length. The mesquite, the acacia, and the cactus constitute almost the entire vegetation of this ill-famed spot, in which murders were frequent. Beyond this stretches out a vast plain called the Leona, covered with flocks and herds, and inhabited by deer. Then the landscape becomes suddenly much diversified; hills succeed hills, approach each other, and then retire, leaving in the intermediate space small prairies covered with flowers, cut up by broad but shallow rivulets, which wind along beneath the shade of the walnut-tree, disappear in a tiny valley, and finally lose themselves in the distance. The greater number of these hills are covered with matted grass, from eighteen inches to two feet in length, which is a favourite food with both tame and wild animals. Here and there, at intervals, are clumps of trees, on which blue birds, cardinals, and golden-necked starlings chirp and flutter in thousands.

I arrived at Castroville at one o'clock in the morning, and directed my steps to the house of the good missionary, to take up my quarters there. Fancy my

astonishment at finding it already tenanted. A family had taken possession of it, and were living there quite at ease. What more natural than to occupy an empty house? Still the reception I met with bore little resemblance to that of the Hound in "La Fontaine." It is but fair to state that the conduct of this family towards me was very gracious. They prepared a bed for me, and did all the honours of the house which they had usurped. I slept so soundly under the same roof with my new friends, that I rose next morning much later than the sun. I dressed in all haste, and proceeded to a wretched cabin, which they call the church, to celebrate the Divine mysteries. There was no one present. My arrival had not been as yet announced to the people. After mass, I made an inspection of the parsonage. It had been built by the Abbé Dubuis, aided by his colleague, the Abbé Chazelle, who had since then died, after an illness of three months. It was constructed of wood, stone, and brick. Here and there, in the angles of the walls, were large fissures, which opened much frequented passages for lizards and serpents, as also for rats, ants, scorpions, and tarantulas. This building consisted of two rooms separated by a corridor; of a barn, in front of which was a garden for vegetables, and flanked by a yard and two cabins, one of which served by turns for stable, granary, and henhouse, and sometimes for all three together; whilst the other, which was constructed with branches and covered with thatch, was at once the kitchen and schoolroom. In the garden, near my room, was the grave of the Abbé Chazelle, covered over and perfumed with mignonette.

Both of the fellow-labourers had been struck down at

the same time by dangerous maladies. While one lay on a buffalo hide on the ground, the other pined away on a table which served him as a bed. No physician was at hand to assist them in their sickness, and their only medicine was a little cold water. One day when they could with difficulty hold themselves erect, they crawled outside the house to mark the spot where the survivor should inter the other. Although at that time Abbé Chazelle was in a less dangerous state than his companion, still he died a few days afterwards of languor, nostalgia, and want. The Abbé Dubuis tottered to the side of his poor brother, gave him the last consolations of religion, in a voice almost deprived of utterance; and then, by a last effort, conveyed his remains to the spot which he had chosen as his sepulchre. Affecting spectacle! The dying burying the dead. The sight of this green grave brought tears to my eyes; and kneeling on the bed of repose where lay my predecessor, I offered up a fervent prayer to God for that soul which had endured so much, and whose experience of the Missions was only associated with suffering and misery.

I pursued my domiciliary inspection, and with a view of establishing myself in my new habitation, made choice of a room on the right hand as being the less commodious of the two. The floor was the bare earth, overgrown with small plants, bearing tiny white flowers. As it had been taken military possession of by three formidable republics of ants, I proceeded forthwith to dislodge them. Vain effort! It was an heroic undertaking, but, alas! my strength was unequal to its accomplishment; two years of incessant labour were devoted to it in vain. The bed was so rickety, and so badly held together, that I abandoned it altogether, and

instead prepared for myself a hammock, which I suspended under the gallery in the garden. The wretched fare, to which my poverty subjected me, added considerably to my discomforts. I had discovered a small quantity of pork and bacon in the granary, as also some pieces of dried venison, which I mistook for sponges. To me these viands were most unpalatable; and to remove their flavour I used them with a mixture of pepper, pimento, and vinegar, which scorched and excoriated my mouth. In revenge, I made terrible onslaughts on a kind of wild salad, which I gathered in the mountains at the risk of being bitten by rattlesnakes, or scalped by the Indians. In these countries oil is very dear, I was therefore obliged to use milk for seasoning purposes.

Castroville is a collection of huts, of every shape and size. The streets run at right angles to each other. It is bounded on the west by the small river Medina, and on the east by hills more or less wooded. The situation is low; weeds spring up everywhere, cover the streets with a thick carpet, and afford shelter to multitudes of ants, reptiles, and insects, as also to a very small species of rabbit. The people appeared to have blamed themselves and repented somewhat during the absence of the Abbé Dubuis. They seemed to have discovered that their conduct towards the good priest had been very faulty. The school which my fellow-labourer had founded, and in which from sixty to eighty children of both sexes received gratuitous instruction, had been closed at his departure. I reopened it, and taught the children their catechism, French, and even a little English and German, which I learned myself whilst instructing them. Still I made but poor progress; and my igno-

rance of their language prevented me from entering into any social intercourse with the people. Thus condemned to silence and to a state of complete isolation, I fell into mortal *ennui* before the end of a fortnight.

A few days after my arrival in Castroville I baptized an infant. The ceremony over, the father inquired how much he was in my debt. As soon as I understood him, I informed him, in the best way I could, that we had nothing fixed in these matters, and that I should receive with gratitude whatever he might offer. Upon which he made me a very polite bow. The idea of this highly lucrative *début* threw me into fits of laughter; still the reflection would force itself upon me, that should I continue to proceed at this rate much longer, starvation and death were inevitable. Another day an old woman handed me a sixpence, saying, "Here, your Reverence, take this, and say as many masses as you can for it." "Keep your money," replied I, smiling, "and I'll offer up the Holy Sacrifice to-morrow on your behalf." She went her way, radiant with joy, but carrying off her sixpence. In this way I might have contributed, from time to time, to the happiness of my parishioners; but I had no idea whatever of inducing them to believe that priests possessed the happy knack of living without food; and I resolved therefore, and in order to secure the solid establishment of the Mission, to exercise generosity only in such cases of charity as rendered its exercise a duty. And after all, I had no great reason to complain of the people. They appeared to take my youth into consideration, and to accord me their sympathies. From time to time, too, they made me small offerings of vegetables and fresh meat. These were a great treat. Indeed, compared with the venison—nay, even

with my wild salad—they were quite matters of luxury and high living.

The Abbé Dubuis arrived at last. He remained a few months, and reserved to himself all the drudgery of the Mission. The people improved. I made progress in German. Presents were not so scarce as of old; the food more tolerable; indeed, it even sometimes happened that our wants were all but supplied. A collection of minerals and curious animals constituted my principal riches. In my repertory might be seen a centipede eleven inches long, and a caterpillar thirteen inches in length and two in circumference. As for serpents, I had them of all sizes and of every variety. Selection was easy; they were everywhere under our feet; we walked on them, and crushed them unconsciously, without paying any attention to the fact. The business of destroying them was left to the pigs, the cats, and even the fowls. These fell resolutely on the serpent's head, and devoured it, without subsequently experiencing any bodily inconvenience, an example which was not lost on us. At Quihi, a tiger hunter killed a rattlesnake which he had mistaken for a dead tree; the reptile measured seventeen feet in length, eighteen inches in circumference, and was furnished with twenty-five rings or rattles. One day the Abbé Dubuis went to our little barn for some maize, and took up a serpent in his hand, mistaking it for a blade of corn; another day a cobra de capello glided into our school-room, and was on the point of biting one of the children, when M. Dubuis killed it with a blow of a stick in the most business-like manner imaginable. We had a horse, which we allowed to roam at large through the prairie. One evening we missed the beast, and the Abbé and I

set out to look for him. Lest we should lose each other, I remained stationary on an open spot whence the town could be seen, while the Abbé Dubuis searched about to the right and to the left for the horse, taking care, at the same time, to be always within hail. The night was coming on apace, but no horse. All at once I perceived at my feet, and gliding from under the grass, where he had lain concealed for a long time, a rattlesnake of about two yards in length. I was about to take to my heels, when I bethought me that this serpent captured alive would be a great acquisition to my collection of reptiles, or at all events his skin would make a grand pair of slippers for my mother. Quick as thought I rushed upon him, and knocked him senseless with a large clod of earth; I then tied a cord tightly round his neck. In the meantime the horse was found, and we retraced our steps to the town, one with the horse, the other with the rattlesnake, which commenced by degrees to recover his strength in a most alarming manner, making the air resound with the noise of his rattles, and dragging my arms about by his strong and rapid writhings. I durst not let go my hold for fear of being bitten. The efforts therefore which I made to hold him, and the fear of being bitten, threw me into a state of profuse perspiration; however, I arrived at last, and tied the serpent to a bench, keeping down his head with my foot during the operation. Next day we were three at dinner: our bill of fare, however, included but three eggs. But what was to be done? I proposed that we should eat the serpent; M. Dubuis approved of the idea, remarking: "If the flesh be good, we shall have in future wherewith to satisfy our appetite, nay, even to exceed the bounds of moderation, should we

be so inclined." Accordingly, I summoned to my aid all my culinary skill to dress the serpent, and in a very short time it appeared on the table, stripped of its skin, deprived of head and tail, cut into small pieces, gritted, and well spiced with cayenne pepper; the new dish seemed palatable enough, it tasted somewhat of frogs and tortoise, but our natural repugnance to it was insurmountable,—the idea of eating a serpent shocked our stomachs, otherwise we might have bid defiance to hunger. The bite of the rattlesnake is not always mortal; one day a rattlesnake sprung upon a colonist, and bit him in the leg. The unfortunate fellow, tortured as he was by the excruciating pain of the wound, fancied he was dying. I was called to administer the last sacrament. Now, I never left the house without a small phial of liquid ammoniac and a bistoury. Having reached the sick man's bed, I enlarged the wound with my bistoury, and then cauterised it well with the ammoniac; eight days afterwards the patient was completely cured. Another time I was saying mass, and our sacristan, who had been a schoolmaster in his time, was clerk on the occasion. He was an old little man with enormous spectacles, which prevented him from seeing. As he was removing the book from one side of the altar to the other, he felt something creep up between his legs; it was a royal serpent, a harmless reptile of great beauty, which had its nest under the altar. As soon as the sacristan saw it, he commenced screaming at the top of his voice and dancing about from side to side, all the while pommelling the poor serpent with the missal; at last it relaxed its hold and darted into its nest under the altar.

To enjoy the luxury of a little fresh meat from time

to time, we fattened cats, which I subsequently metamorphosed into most delicious fricassees. The chase too, one way or other, contributed to the maintenance of our table. Whenever there were any pieces of small money in our round snuff-box, which was our iron-safe, and which in that capacity received all presents of our parishioners, — on the occasion of baptisms, which were rare, and of marriages, which were rarer still, — I laid out a portion of it in the purchase of powder and shot, to be employed in shooting woodquests and squirrels. Not that I loved the sport; for, to fatigue myself to death during the entire length of a day, besides tearing my skin and clothes in killing one or two very harmless animals, was never to me a source of pleasure. But necessity consulteth not our tastes. One Thursday when our treasure amounted to ten sous, and the children had a holiday, I provided myself with ammunition and started in company with Charles, a young French gentleman and a keen sportsman, to shoot wild turkeys on the picturesque banks of the Medina. After beating the bushes and copsewood, to the utter destruction of our clothes and hands, we failed to start a single bird. Seeing this, my companion directed his attention to coveys of partridges, which whizzed by us at every step. I continued my way along the river's edge, picking my steps with great caution, lest I should tread on rattlesnakes or *congos*, — hideous black serpents, extremely dangerous, which abound in the neighbourhood of watercourses. I arrived at length at a bend of the river where the water calmly reposed under the shadow of enormous fig trees. Athwart the foliage the sun's rays gilded the particoloured waterlilies, which formed the framework of this sparkling

mirror. The chase was soon forgotten, and whilst I stood admiring this lovely spot, the leaves of the water-lilies were agitated, and I observed them disappear, and form, as it were, a pathway under the water. It at once occurred to me that some large fish was taking his promenade through this delicious aquatic garden, when suddenly I recognised the bony, dark brown back of a crocodile.

In general, when I apprehend even an imaginary danger, my first impulse is to avoid it; nevertheless, should any useful object be attained by confronting it, my second impulse brings me into its presence; hence I resolved on killing this amphibious creature, with a view to increase our stock of provisions. Being provided with small shot only, I charged the gun heavily with it, in the fervent hope that the animal would turn the side of his head towards me. I raised the gun to my shoulder, and stood ready to fire. But whether it was ill-luck, or that the crocodile suspected danger, the fact is, he only exposed the front of his head. At length, however, he did make the desired move: I fired, and the animal disappeared under water. Have I missed him? No. Something comes up to the surface of the water. I leaped for joy on perceiving that it was the crocodile's belly. In truth I was very proud. This animal is so hideous that I had no pity for him. I called out to my companion with all my strength. He at the same moment was hurling anathemas against my shot, the report of which had frightened some partridges which he had kept in view for the last quarter of an hour. Still, fearing that some accident had occurred, he ran towards me in all haste, and entered into all my delight at the sight of this

enormous piece of game, which floated like a quantity of wood on the surface of the water. Still our task was only half done; it remained for us to secure the prize. The river, on issuing from the basin, became very narrow and rapid. Our enormous prey floated down with the current, very slowly, to be sure, but should it once reach this narrow spot, it was entirely lost to us. The basin was very deep, so that we durst not venture in, as neither of us could swim; and although at the place where the river entered, it was shallow enough, yet there was danger of being carried into the deep water beyond our depth by the strength of the current. Quite undecided as to how we should manage, and filled with disagreeable misgivings, we followed the motion of the crocodile with anxious minds. Fortunately, a tree which floated down before it, arrived crosswise, having encountered some obstacle at the point where the river issues from the basin, stopped, and arrested the motion of the crocodile. Time was thus afforded to consider what was best to be done.

I recollected there was a farm-house on the other side of the river, about half-a-mile distant from us. I resolved therefore to cross the river with my clothes on, a task of no small difficulty, a dangerous one too, as I was up to my arm-pits in water. Having reached the farm-house, I found no one there, and retraced my steps quite out of sorts. The second passage of the river was even more dangerous than the first, and I was nigh falling into a hole, into which the water flung itself with tremendous fury. What was to be done now? We cut a long thick *liane*, which was to be our harpoon; and having advanced into the

water up to the waist, I cast it over the crocodile's back, (for by this time his back was again uppermost), and we by this means drew him to the bank. All at once, his tail commenced to lash our legs. Off we set at the top of our speed, uttering cries of horror the while. We fancied that those jaws of eighteen inches, and armed with sixty-seven long sharp teeth, were at our heels. At length we stopped. "Sure as a gun," said I, "he is dangerously wounded, and these movements of the tail are either the last convulsions of expiring life, or merely the agitation of the water which we set in motion." This tail, too, was to me a subject of serious reflection. Report said it was excellent for culinary purposes; it would serve therefore to save, in a very satisfactory way, our provisions of dried and smoked meat. Having recharged my pistol and rifle, we returned, but the crocodile had not moved. I fired point-blank into his eye, and under the shoulder, not indeed without trembling a little. He was dead at last, there could be no doubt about it now. In length he measured ten feet, and in circumference, round the middle of the carcass, four feet. He was a little too heavy to be carried by two men. We therefore abandoned him for the moment, half plunged in the water and mud, with his belly turned up to the sun, and off we started for Castroville, to procure assistance and announce our victory. Although crocodiles are not rare in the Medina, still they are very seldom killed. The news caused quite a sensation in the town. A waggon set out without delay, followed by a veritable procession as uproarious and as gay as one can well imagine. The distance was six miles. It required six men to put the animal into the waggon. Although killed in the morning, it did

not reach our garden until the evening. On opening it we found in the stomach two stones as large as the fist, six others as large as hens' eggs, besides a great quantity of pebbles. Add to this seven or eight entire lobsters. The cooking of it was a real *fête*. It is only the fleshy portions of the tail that are eaten. We distributed it liberally. The flesh did not strike me as well flavoured. It was but too evident that the animal had lain in the mud during the hottest part of the day. There also emanated from it a powerful odour of musk, which got into our heads, and destroyed our appetites. This odour remained in our clothes for more than a week afterwards.

Sometimes I took out the boys of the school for a walk. In winter they collected fire-wood and wild salad for their families; while in summer they gathered flowers and moss for the church altar. These walks delighted them; and they cherished the tenderest love for him who afforded them this enjoyment. Still I durst not allow them this pleasure too often, as I feared to expose them to the danger of being bitten by serpents, or pricked by the thorns of the cactus, whose wounds are very painful, and sometimes very slow in healing. To save them from these accidents, it was necessary in certain places to carry them one by one in my arms from one spot to another. I was also obliged to examine with the greatest care the salad they had collected, for in the neighbourhood of Castroville there is found an herb which resembles it very much, and is of such a deadly nature that the Indians employ it to poison their arrows. On one occasion an entire family, consisting of six persons, died at Vandenberg in the most excruciating tortures after partaking of it.

Our church was a small hut, constructed of earth and wood. Only a very few families could find accommodation in it, while the great bulk of the congregation were obliged to assist at mass, and the other offices of religion outside. We borrowed a small bell from a Swiss colonist, who, according to the custom of his country, had it suspended from his cow's neck. On the roof of the church, four pieces of wood surmounted by a cross were adjusted, and this was the belfry. Notwithstanding the smallness of the bell, the air is so pure in Texas, that its tinklings were heard over all the town, and even far away on the plain, and in the mountains, more particularly in the morning and evening.

Already the zeal of the Abbé Dubuis for the religious, moral, and material amelioration of the colonists was producing its fruits. The people began to sanctify the Sunday, and were losing the habit of working on that day, with a view of *reposing* the next in drunkenness and debauchery. Warnings, too, which the Almighty vouchsafed them, strengthened the preachings of the good missionary. Numerous accidents befell those colonists who worked on Sundays. In the end, all felt the obligation of keeping holy the Sabbath day. On Sundays before and after the exercises of religion, and on week days after work, we had numerous visits from those who sought our counsel with reference to the management and improvement of their farms. The colonists even submitted their litigated points to the Abbé Dubuis, and invariably abided by his decisions. They regarded in the missionary not merely the priest who instructs, encourages, and consoles, but further also, and more the practical man, who is acquainted with a

thousand means of conquering the material necessities of life, of rendering the soil productive, of augmenting its resources; in a word they looked upon him as a father of a family, who provides for all the necessities of his children, both physical and moral, entirely forgetting himself for their sakes, and enduring on their behalf fatigues and privations of all sorts. And thus we were wholly devoted to our flocks, and to the furtherance of their interests spiritual and temporal. The tender piety of our people, the poverty of our little church, the simplicity of our ceremonies, frequently touched my heart; and many a time, while I held in my hands our only ostensory of plain wood, which contained the most sacred Host, tears of joy fell from my eyes. Ah! in the noble cathedrals of France, how full of splendour is religion in the external pomp of her ceremonial. Gold and silver, and thousands of lights, dazzle the eye, and speak to the imagination; here, on the contrary, everything speaks to the heart, and transports it burning with love to the throne of God.

Every Sunday, at ten o'clock, was celebrated the adorable sacrifice of the mass. The music was very good. We had organised a choir, which succeeded beyond our expectation. At three o'clock the faithful assembled to say the rosary. This exercise was followed by vespers and the benediction of the most Blessed Sacrament. The paschal solemnity of 1849 was truly consoling to us. All the Catholics of Castroville, with very few exceptions, approached the holy table. I had resolved that our little chapel should be decked out and wear quite a festive air for this solemnity, so I commenced its decoration the previous evening, and borrowed all the shawls and pieces of

finery, and candlesticks, to be found in Castroville. I even procured two small doors to construct lateral altars. The muslin curtains and shawls served as tapestry. I turned wooden vases in a lathe, and gilded them. In these I placed flowers of every hue and size, which I had gathered in the woods and open country. All this magnificence filled the colonists with astonishment. Next day the Catholics of the town, and of the surrounding country, assisted at the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, with feelings of profound reverence, on bended knees, bareheaded, and regardless of the burning sun, which darted its rays upon them. Poor isolated congregation! How lively, sincere, touching, was this piety on that day! The Almighty must have looked down with complacency on the little corner of earth where thou offeredst up thy prayers! How favourably did thy piety contrast with the wavering, lukewarm piety of the city population of Europe! In deserts and solitude, the blessings of religion are so much the more fully appreciated, as they are rarely accorded. Human institutions, for the protection of life and property, either do not exist, or are, at best, very inefficient. Man seems placed more immediately under the immediate protection of his Creator, and hence it comes that he raises his eyes and heart unto Him with greater facility and truth.

At this time I received from my bishop a letter, in which the good prelate expresses all his tender solicitude for our poor mission. . . . . This, too, would form a magnificent chapter of all his labours and sacrifices! Poor like ourselves, the bishop was obliged to perform all the menial offices of his house, as well as

to teach and administer the sacrament, as a simple priest. Many are not aware, perhaps, that missionary bishops and priests receive no salary, either from government, or from the church, or from individuals. Their only resources for subsistence, maintenance, journeys, building of churches, hospitals, schools, convents, and colleges, are derived from their own industry, the offerings of their families, who in general are very poor, and public or private charity, with some aid from the Propagation of the Faith. All this is but a mere trifle, when in presence of necessities so great and so numerous. It is only within a few years that the Propagation of the Faith has disbursed for all the missions of the globe about three millions of francs. The revenue of each bishop is very slender, in every respect, the gross sum, on an average, not exceeding fourteen or fifteen thousand francs; and this is diminished owing to the decreased value of money in foreign countries. A bishop who receives twenty thousand francs in the United States, that is, four thousand dollars, in reality only receives in value four thousand francs; for the dollar in the United States, as far as outlay is concerned, is equivalent to about a franc in French money. The receipts of the Propagation of the Faith, from its foundation in 1822 to 1846, that is to say, in twenty-four years, have amounted to about thirty millions. Now, the English Bible Society, which has been in existence only a few years, had disbursed in 1851 about ninety-five millions of francs. If to this sum we add the enormous outlays of the American Bible Society, the Hindoostan Society, and the Anglo-Indian and German Societies, for the diffusion of the Bible and religious books in India alone, we shall have

a total quite fabulous and incredible, and in comparison with which the disbursements of the Propagation of the Faith will appear as the grain of mustard seed mentioned in the Gospel. Still the work of the Propagation of the Faith, notwithstanding its insignificance when compared with the wants of the missions or with the immense resources of the Protestant Bible Society, is blessed by God, and produces results of such magnitude, that those of our rich adversaries might be set down at zero, even according to their own avowal, in comparison with them. What secures our triumph in the propagation of the light of the Gospel is our self-abnegation, our devotedness, and our exclusive and unchangeable confidence in God. With us, labourers in the Lord's vineyard are wanted; but the Almighty visibly protects us, and rewards all our labours and fatigues. Protestant missionaries, on the other hand, largely recompensed as they are by Governments and Bible Societies, exhibit little of devotedness or self-denial in the working of the mission. They are persons who live in the midst of ease and comfort; and, having powerful aids to back and support them, they amass worldly wealth and riches in the exercise of an easy ministry, which is productive of no fruit whatever, except for the missionaries themselves. In a word, they receive a great deal, and give but little. We, on the contrary, receive nothing, and give all, even our lives; and thus it is that the poverty of our missionaries is extreme. One time, the Abbé Dubuis fancied that he stood in need of a necessary article of dress. Well, out of a blue cotton petticoat, which a widower had given on the occasion of his wife's death, he made for himself a pair of pantaloons. On another occasion, he

prayed his congregation to pardon him if he did not preach to them; his strength was not equal to it, he said; he had not touched food for forty-eight hours! For a long time we had only one cassock between us; so that whilst one said mass, the other walked about in his shirt-sleeves. I met the missionary priest of Brazoria on one occasion. The good man's pantaloons were of a blue colour, and very wide; his coat, of black cotton velvet; the shape and colour of his hat baffled all description. A kind of old tin bath, without a bottom, served him for bed, altar to say mass, and dining-table. What efforts of management and industry, what obstacles to surmount, what miseries to undergo, in these solitudes, in order to support life, to establish a church and a school, and secure a prosperous future to the mission! Surely, the missionaries cannot expect that Providence will come to their aid on every occasion by a miraculous interposition; but at least (thanks to God!) those distant regions are frequently witnesses of prodigies of energy, constancy, and patience. Let us not, however, expose all the wretchedness of the past; let us rather throw over it the mantle of forgetfulness: God sees it all, and that is enough.

And yet the missionary has greater need than others of good food, and material comforts, of every kind. Obliged to undergo unheard-of fatigues, he rests not quietly within doors, with his parishioners grouped around him, despatching the business of the mission without rising from his seat. At every instant we must set out for distant colonies intrusted to our care, and which are spread over an immense surface. We perform these long journeys sometimes on horseback, and sometimes in a rickety waggon: we rarely go on foot;

besides the fatigue, it would be attended with great danger. Sometimes the route is uncertain. In order not to lose our way, it is necessary to make all the little observations by which an experienced traveller is guided. Every sign is to be studied — the bark of the trees, the shades of which indicate north or south; the branches and foliage, the bend of which points out the direction of the trade winds; the tracks of animals, and the marks of man and wheels, when they are to be found.

My first excursion was to the colony of Dhanis, thirty-five miles west of Castroville. An Alsacian, who had served in Africa, offered his services to take me there on his waggon, drawn by oxen. It was in winter, while the days were short and the weather very inclement, owing to the north wind, which brought with it from the Rocky Mountains a piercing cold, which froze my very vitals. In addition to this, there was a dense fog, a thing of rare occurrence in those countries. We had hardly entered the Chaparal, situate on the hills which are in the neighbourhood of Castroville, when we found it impossible to see our way, and no alternative was left us but to bivouac in the open copse-wood. It was the first time that I had passed the night *sub divo*, and, for the moment, I feared it would be my last. My companion unyoked his oxen, while I broke down boughs of the mesquite, and heaped together a quantity of dry wood for a fire. This operation was by no means an easy one, for the darkness was so great, that I could not move a pace without risk of losing my way. The Alsacian coming to my aid, we collected a large quantity of fire-wood, which it was necessary to use thriftily, as the night was very long. Then, enveloped

in our blankets, we stretched ourselves on the earth, with our feet towards the fire, for a night's repose. But such repose! Thanks to the fog, I felt, at the end of half-an-hour, as if I were in an iced bath. The fire scorched my feet, whilst my teeth chattered with cold. I shivered all over, and was so stiff that I could hardly move, while the Alsacian, who was the stronger man, and used to campaigning, snored as lustily as if he were at home in his bed. I had neither courage nor strength to awaken him, but lay on my bed of stone and mud, doubtful as to whether I should ever rise from it. Before daybreak, the Alsacian woke up, and came over to me. He heard my dying voice, took me in his arms, and laid me before the fire, which he renewed with branches and briers. Animation was restored by degrees. After a little, I could move my limbs, and, as there were none of them frozen, we were able to resume our journey. But our oxen had disappeared in the fog. Here was a business. We set about looking for them, each at his own side, and groping our way as we proceeded. After marches and counter-marches to no effect, I at last perceived, at an opening, the footmarks of animals on the grass. These I followed for a long distance; but fearing lest I might lose my way, I retraced my steps. Suddenly we heard, at no great distance from us, the crackling of branches, which were trodden down under the steps of some large animal. Arriving on the spot, we found that it was our oxen, which were cropping the trees hard by our bivouac, and which appeared quite unconscious that we had given ourselves so much trouble on their account. We had lost two or three hours in useless search, so, without further loss of time, we again yoked our beasts, and set out.

The Chaparal in which we passed the night, had been fatal to many a colonist who went there to gather wood or nuts. One of the first missionaries of the colony lost his way in it, and was never afterwards heard of. Those who went to look for him, found the bleached skeletons of many colonists who had come by their death there, sitting at the foot of a tree with their sacks still full of nuts.

The sun burst forth at last, and chased away the fog. The route, which was soon lit up and warmed by his rays, has something truly wild and tropical about it. The cactus and the Mexican agaves abound in the greatest variety, growing here as luxuriantly as under the equator. In this part of Texas you frequently meet dry beds of rivers. Sometimes, too, the rivers are intermitting, appearing for a while, then disappearing they are lost to your sight. I stopped for a short time at Quihi, a small Alsacian colony, twelve miles from Castroville, frequently visited by Indians. Once a colonist named Meyer was seized here by the Comanches, bound to a tree, and transfixed by their arrows. On another occasion, an Alsacian woman was made prisoner by the ferocious Red Skins, and carried off on horseback; but profiting by a favourable moment she slipped from their grasp, and galloped off at the top of her horse's speed, while the Indians gave chase, and pierced her body with their lances and arrows. Still she succeeded in effecting her escape, notwithstanding all her wounds. But the shock was too much for her; for in a short time after the poor creature became a maniac.

Seven miles from Quihi is Vandenberg, another Alsacian colony, where we remained to dine. In a small

valley near this latter village we found, strewn on the earth in myriads, balls of native ore of various sizes and covered with a calcareous coating. But for want of sufficient fuel, this mine, lying on the earth's surface, is turned to no account. From this place to Dhanis the route lies through a country wilder than we had yet crossed, and much frequented by the Indians. In a vast prairie we found a natural road traced out by the constant incursions of these people. At every instant we saw herds of deer, which appeared quite tame, and looked at us, as we passed, with astonishment. It is here, too, in these solitudes that the Mexican lion is met with, which rather resembles the lioness of our menageries than the king of the forest. Fatigued and bewildered as much by these ever-shifting pictures and the ideas they gave rise to, as by the joltings of our waggon, we arrived at length at the end of our journey. It was night. My companion treated me to a part of his bed. Like all the cabins in the thinly-peopled regions of Mexico, his cabin was a square formed of stakes, driven into the earth and joined and kept together by other vertical stakes, or by thongs of leather. The roof was of thatch. He offered me a glass of whisky, the very smell of which gave me headache.

Of all our colonies Dhanis was the most exposed to the Indians. In five weeks they had paid three visits, obliging the people each time to furnish them with food, tobacco, and powder. With a view of preventing the recurrence of such disorders, the government established a military camp two miles from Dhanis. Wild animals abound in the neighbourhood of this colony. On one occasion during mass, which was

celebrated in a wooden hut, the dogs commenced barking in a most terrible manner. My Alsacian seized his rifle, left the cabin, and went out to see the cause of the noise. It was an enormous panther, which chased by the dogs, had taken refuge in a tree near the cabin which served us as a chapel. To see the beast and shoot it dead, was for my friend the work of an instant. Another time an ill-advised boar, attracted no doubt by the chant, entered the chapel whilst we were at vespers. His curiosity cost him dearly. He was killed on the spot, and eaten next day.

I had come to Dhanis to baptize two children of an Alsacian. Being as yet, at that epoch, little acquainted with German, I had written on a scrap of paper the word *taufen* (to baptize) in order not to confound it with *kaufen* (to purchase), or *verkaufen* (to sell), words which were ever resounding in my ears. Unfortunately, setting out, I forgot the paper, and the three words were so confounded in my memory that I had no means of discovering the one which was so indispensable to me. Trusting to my good star, I directed my steps towards the father's house, and seeing a man on the threshold of the cabin I inquired of him, after the usual salutations, had he any children to . . . . *verkaufen* (to sell)? By the surprise and wrath depicted in the Alsacian's countenance, I at once discovered that I had employed the wrong word, and accordingly asked him if he had not two children to . . . *kaufen* (to buy?) This time, his patience gave way, and I received a broadside of such energetic compliments, which I understood one way or other, that I shall not now attempt to translate them. At last as there was but

one other word to pronounce, I was sure there would be no mistake this time, so letting pass the avalanche of abuse which I had brought down upon me, I said to him, with all mildness: "If it is neither to sell nor to buy, then it must be to baptize." My friend looked at me fixedly, and in the end discovered, by my appearance and dress, that I might be the priest who had come to baptize his two children. Having made this discovery, he burst out into fits of endless laughter, and the infection seizing me, I imitated his uproarious hilarity. This over, we settled on the hour and place when the ceremony should take place. Since then I never trusted to my *bonne étoile.*

I returned to Castroville, alone, and on horseback. It was evening when I reached the town. The Abbé Dubuis had already arrived from an excursion in the east. Seated by the fireside, we recounted our adventures, and the impressions of our respective journeys. Then memory carried us away, naturally enough, to France, our families, and our friends; — subjects ever full of charms, and upon which we always returned with renewed pleasure. Who can describe the joy felt by a missionary, condemned to isolation, obliged to concentrate within himself his feelings and ideas, separated from his flock as much by the difficulty of expressing himself in their language as by the difference of position and intelligence, when he finds a friend, and can freely unbosom to him all his thoughts and feelings? And if this friend be a fellow-countryman and a *confrère*, the charm of these conversations makes the hours pass like sweet dreams, lightly and rapidly. But, alas! these evenings of delightful intercourse, when there was a

free and mutual interchange of thoughts and feelings, were very rare. Our missionary duties kept us always on horseback, galloping across woods and plains. The fire was dying away, the dawn was brightening the prairie, and we were still recounting our adventures, and talking over the mission, and our absent kinsfolk and friends, and the old country.

CHAP. III.

AN ALARM. — SCENES IN THE WILDERNESS. — THE CAMP OF THE LEONA. — EXPEDITION TO PASO-DEL-NORTE. — STEEPLE-CHASE ON A WILD HORSE. — FREDERICKSBURG. — RUINS OF THE SPANISH MISSIONS. — SUNSET. — THE CAMP OF SAN ANTONIO. — A DISAGREEABLE RENCOUNTER. — BRAUNFELS.

It will be remembered that our pastoral duties extended to the Catholic soldiers who served in the American army. One morning a soldier came from the camp at Dhanis, with two good horses, and asked me to go and see one of his comrades, who had need of my ministry. He was a gallant Irishman, whose only fault was an insatiable thirst for whisky. He regretted having left his own beautiful country, and spoke with bitterness of heart of the cruel treatment which the Catholic soldiers received at the hands of Protestant officers. In these isolated camps the soldiers are quite at the mercy of their commanders, who feel or entertain a deep-rooted, innate hatred for Irishmen and the Catholic religion. The most barbarous chastisements are inflicted for offences which in France would be fully expiated by a few hours' imprisonment. I have seen soldiers suspended by the arms from the branches of trees for drunkenness. Sometimes, too, they tie their arms and legs, and fling them repeatedly into a river, and then drag them to the bank with a cord. A soldier, stricken with a severe malady, lay on his bed of suffering in chains. He died in his chains; and, perhaps, in consequence of being

kept chained. The surgeon and commanding officer were, it is true, brought to trial, for the public voice accused them loudly of murder; but their judges, who were quite as intolerant as the accused in matters of caste and religion, acquitted them. Happily, such cases of cruelty as the above-mentioned are rare. They are individual acts for which, ordinarily speaking, the American officers, who in general are men distinguished alike for their high intelligence and accomplishments, are in nowise responsible. Still these cruelties serve to nurture a bitter animosity in the hearts of the Irish soldiers, and to teach them that the liberty, equality, and fraternity of the United States are either hollow phrases, or applied ironically to European novices.

At the camp of Dhanis I baptized a sergeant's child. The sponsor on the occasion was the farrier of the company: the poor fellow was killed the same afternoon, by an Indian who was lurking about the tents, seeking an opportunity to steal some of our horses. I intended to make an excursion as far as the camp called Fort-Inge, forty-seven miles from Dhanis, and more than eighty miles west of Castroville. The major promised me a good mule for the journey. I therefore resolved to remain for the night at the camp, and start at sunrise next morning for the Leona. The doctor, a Scotchman by birth, but of French extraction, took a great liking to me, and offered me half his tent, and a bed for the night. I accepted the kind offer with pleasure. While supper was preparing we went out, at the risk of meeting Indians, to search for fossils on the banks of the Rio-Seco, which runs near the tents. Fossils abound in the bed of this river. Besides shells, the calcareous molecules of which were replaced by molecules of iron,

we found a petrified oyster, eighteen inches long, and weighing fourteen pounds. During the night we were aroused from sleep by two shots fired by the sentinel who was guarding the horses. The circumstance which led to this incident was this. The commandant's cook, purposing to make some cakes for the next day, went out to collect wood wherewith to heat the oven. Unfortunately, he directed his steps to where the horses were picketed. The murder committed during the day had aroused the vigilance of the sentinel; he hearing footfalls, and being prevented by the obscurity of the night from recognising the cook, cried out,— "Who goes there?" There was no reply. Off went a shot in the direction of the noise. "Who goes there?" again shouted the sentinel. Same silence. Off went another shot; but this time the ball had struck some one. It was the poor cook, whom fear had rendered dumb and motionless. The ball had caused a slight flesh wound. By this time the entire camp was on foot. Every one rushed to the scene of action; soldiers with their muskets and sabres, officers with swords and pistols. Every one carried a lantern or some light or other. But if it be a fact that all were armed and furnished with lights, it is also true that not a single individual was completely dressed. As soon as the doctor declared that the cook was more frightened than hurt, each returned to his bed. It was then I cast a glance on the actors in this scene, the most novel I had ever witnessed, inasmuch as shirts and night-caps were the prevailing costumes. In a few minutes all had retired to their tents.

The following morning a soldier was absent from the muster-roll. He was subsequently found bathed in his

blood. Unable to endure the hardships of the service, and the brutality of the officers, the unfortunate fellow had cut his throat with a razor. In these (extraordinary) countries one sees a great deal in a short time. I took my departure sick at heart. Scenes like those I have just described work deep furrows in the heart. They wear out a man, and that quickly.

On leaving the camp at Dhanis, I traversed a chaparal of a most diversified character, covered with oaks and mesquites. A series of small hills, which I was obliged to cross, rose and fell on a calcareous base of diluvian formation. Six miles from the camp I witnessed a most shocking spectacle. Seven Mexicans lay on the grass, pierced with arrows, scalped, and mangled. A heap of white ashes, still warm, showed that they had been surprised at their encampment the preceding night. There was a waggon near the spot, but the oxen had been taken away—the chests with which it had been laden broken open, and their contents rifled and carried off. Black vultures were bearing away in their beaks pieces of human flesh. Fearing lest I, too, might be surprised by the Indians, and meet the same fate as the Mexicans, I continued my route without stopping.

I entered a vast and undulating prairie which resembled an immense cemetery (which had been abandoned), where every grave formed a funereal wave. Here and there, at long intervals, mesquites with gnarled branches displayed their foliage of bluish green. Clumps of acacias too were distributed in the most capricious way over this plain. The plain itself was covered with the most fertile pastures. Herds of deer were quietly browsing on the rich herbage, and seemed quite heedless of my presence. A stag, which lay with his

whole family by the way side, suffered me to approach without moving. In the foreground, along the northern horizon, were wooded hills. Over these rose giant mountains, some of which stood out against the sky with their ridges of granite—others displayed their reddish summits—whilst others were clad in sombre verdure. This magnificent landscape, wherein the wild struggled for pre-eminence with the sublime, was steeped in floods of light which rendered vague and aërial both colour and form. I was deeply struck with it; and would have spent hours in meditation on the wonderful works of God, lost, as it were, in these boundless solitudes of America.

In the middle of this prairie I crossed, dry-footed, the *Rio-Blanco;* this river must have ceased to flow for many years, for its bed is filled up with sand, and acacias of enormous size, and oaks, and sycamores, are growing in it. I crossed the Rio-Frio about an hour before sunset. The river is broad but very shallow. The water is cold, blue, limpid, and pleasant. My mule and myself stopped a minute or two in the middle of the stream to refresh ourselves. The left bank is covered with a white sand, very fine and brilliant, in which grow a few stunted mesquites. The right bank, on the contrary, is rocky, and covered with trees and luxuriant plants.

At some miles from the camp of the Leona, I witnessed another sight, as hideous as that which had filled me with such horror in the morning, near the camp of Dhanis. A woman was bound to a tree, and entirely scalped. The poor creature still gave signs of life. At her feet lay three Mexicans scalped also, but quite dead. They had received numerous lance wounds. Their

bodies were literally bristling with arrows. Their blood was already clotted; around the woman's mouth was a quantity of bloody hair, which showed that the Indians had endeavoured to make her eat the scalp of one of her companions. Thousands of wasps buzzed voraciously about the four victims. I dashed off to the camp for aid, and arrived there in less than an hour. A physician, followed by a strong escort provided with a stretcher, came for the woman, and conveyed her to the hospital. Fifteen days afterwards she lingered still, and hopes of saving her life eventually were entertained. Were these hopes well grounded? It happens but very rarely, notwithstanding all that romance writers have said to the contrary, that the victim survives the terrible operation of scalping. In 1849, more than two hundred persons, to my own knowledge, were scalped in the west of Texas, and they all succumbed save this poor woman, who enjoyed peradventure the very equivocal advantage of a more protracted suffering before her death. It is true I saw at San Antonio a man who had been scalped; but he had been scalped in a wood, and was thus protected from the sun's rays. Besides, immediate remedies were applied in his case; two most essential conditions, which are rarely fulfilled in places where the Indians exercise their fury.

The colonel who commanded the camp of the Leona was an old student of Saumur. He received me with the greatest kindness and placed a large and well-furnished tent at my disposal. All the Catholic soldiers had full liberty to visit me when they pleased. I visited the immense tent which served them for an hospital, and which contained fourteen or fifteen patients, all Catholics and Irishmen. Notwithstanding their sufferings,

they received me with a joy which deeply affected me. I sat by their bedsides and talked to them of their homes and their holy religion. My visits were long and useful, and attended with solid results.

I have never found more faith, more resignation, or deeper feelings of religion than in the Irish, and particularly in those who were the most unfortunate, and the most severely tried. They love and revere all God's ministers, no matter from what part of the world they come; and for the French missionaries, in particular, they have always manifested a peculiar attachment. The Irish are the most generous people in the world, and the most devoted to works of piety. In this respect there is no difference between rich and poor. The poor sometimes give beyond their means, and without ever reflecting that they thus deprive themselves of what is necessary to prevent them falling themselves into distress and misery. This little digression is to me a duty of gratitude towards this people, so much misunderstood and calumniated, and in whom I have seen so much to admire and esteem.

The morning after my arrival, before breakfast, I visited a small hill of volcanic formation, at the foot of which the camp was situated. It was a fatiguing task for me to clamber over high rocks, heaped one upon another, in the intervals of which grew acacias of immense size. The summit of the Mamelon was bare. The rocks were black, as though they had been carbonised by a subterranean fire long since extinguished. From the top of this hill you command a view remarkable only for its immensity. Nothing varies the landscape. The little river, the Leona, abounding in fish, and covered with water-lilies, wound gracefully

round the camp, under a verdant canopy. During the day, I went in company with the colonel and his family to botanise in a neighbouring wood.

The American government had charged a commission to proceed to Paso-del-Norte, by Texas, with a view of ascertaining whether this route is better and shorter than the route by the Missouri and Santa Fé. The commission was composed of engineers and professors of natural history. They had an escort of two hundred soldiers with them, to defend them against the Indians. In this train were three hundred waggons, laden with provisions, and a large number of horses, mules, and oxen. The object of the commission was to secure advantages at once scientific and commercial. This twofold object was fully attained, and many precious discoveries were made in botany and zoology. They found, in a valley, specimens of the cactus, from five to six feet in diameter. These cactuses were conical in form, and covered with fruits and flowers, and so heavy, that it required six mules to draw one of them in a waggon. A fossil mastodon was found almost entire in a grotto in the middle of a rock. The expedition traversed prairies fifty miles in length, and without rivulet or spring. The supply of water for men and animals was brought enormous distances in huge casks. The commissioners, in their journey, passed the River of the Devil. This river has so many windings that they were obliged to cross it seven times before they reached Paso-del-Norte. In some places its banks are so steep, that they were obliged to throw bridges of ropes across, and to construct rafts for the passage of the cattle.

On its return, the expedition passed by the camp of

the Leona, where I met it. The travellers, at a sumptuous banquet, given in their honour by the colonel, related their adventures and discoveries; and so interested was I by their recitals, that I resolved to accompany them next day. Still, as the Abbé Dubuis might be uneasy at my prolonged absence, I begged the colonel to lend me a horse, which would take me in a few hours to the camp of Dhanis, where I promised to leave the animal, and take a fresh horse to carry me on the same day to Castroville. The colonel kindly acceded to my request. Accordingly I left the camp at sunrise, in company with the travellers. After two hours, I pursued my solitary journey at the top of my horse's speed, lest I should fall in with Indians. When I arrived at the camp of Dhanis, I was in a bath of perspiration, and my horse covered with foam. I went straightway to the commandant, to pray him to lend me another without delay.

"Do you dream of such a thing?" said he to me. "To ride eighty miles the same day! Better rest a little, and you can start again to-morrow morning."

"No, no; I must arrive at Castroville this evening."

"The thing is difficult, but it is possible. Do you ride well?"

"I have never been taught to ride. But once on a horse's back, I fall only when the horse falls."

"That's all that's required. Would you like a — ?" Here he made use of the word *wild*, which conveyed to me the idea of mettlesome, instead of the word *mustang*.

I understood him to offer me a very spirited horse. And, suspecting that he wished to frighten me, I replied firmly, "I desire nothing better. I'll go all the quicker on that account." Whereupon he sent for the horse, and I saw the animal, as he approached, full of fire,

and held with difficulty by four dragoons, whom he tossed from one side to the other, although his legs had been previously tied. At a glance I recognised a real *mustang*, a wild horse of the prairies. I was almost sure of breaking my neck if I mounted such an animal; and the imminent peril made my heart beat in a most unpleasant way. But not wishing to give Americans an opportunity to jeer at a Frenchman, and above all at a Catholic priest, I summoned up all my courage, and prepared to mount.

"Are you really bent upon mounting this horse?" inquired the officer, who no doubt began to feel twitches of remorse at exposing me to such danger. "Recollect that he has been only mounted twice, and that it is but two days since he was nigh breaking my leg."

"Captain," I replied, proudly, "have the horse held fast until I am on his back. Then give him his head."

Taking hold of the mane with one hand, and the saddle with the other, I endeavoured to put my foot in the stirrup, but all my efforts and ingenuity were unavailing, the horse all the time was plunging from one side to the other, and making desperate bounds. My honour was at stake; I retired one or two paces behind, then made a spring, and was in the saddle. Having thrust my feet quickly into the stirrups, and holding the bridle with both hands, I ordered them to loose the thongs which bound his legs, and to give the horse his liberty.

Off he started, rushed down the hill, and crossed the river in the twinkling of an eye, amid the hurrahs of the Irish soldiers who had assembled to witness the scene, and who exulted in my triumph. I was barely able to keep the *mustang's* head in the right direction; he bore

me along with such speed, that I felt a dizziness in the head; at every stump of a tree, at every plant of anything like fantastic shape, he started aside so suddenly, that I was many times in great danger of being flung from the saddle and rolled in the dust. Thanks to God I held fast. After an hour's furious speed the *mustang* became knocked up a little, and I was then able to direct his pace. Arrived at Vandenberg, I made no stay, notwithstanding my fatigue and hunger, and having hastily drunk off a bowl of milk, I resumed my journey. Some panther skins which had been spread out to dry frightened my horse, and he dashed through an opening into an inclosure where a few bulls were peacefully chewing the cud. Instantly, as we appeared, up started the bulls and commenced bellowing most terrifically. The horse, terror-stricken, cleared at one prodigious bound the wall of the inclosure. I remained in the saddle, I know not how; and now we sped through the air more furiously than ever. At length, near Quihi, the horse dashed aside at the sight of a rattlesnake, and in his fright struck against the trunk of a tree and so hurt himself that he was thenceforward obliged to hobble along at a very moderate pace. Although nearly worn out by fatigue and exhaustion, I dismounted, to give some ease to the poor animal, and leading him by the bridle I made the twelve miles which still lay between me and Castroville on foot. Notwithstanding the delay, I arrived before the night set in, and having handed over the poor disabled animal to the sheriff to be sent back to the camp of the Leona, I went to bed. On that day, having made sixty-eight miles on horseback and twelve on foot, under a burning sun, without food or repose, and at the horse's utmost speed, I was so knocked

up and exhausted that I could not eat any supper, so threw myself into my hammock with my clothes on, and was soon asleep, and dreaming of solitude, Indians, balls, and *mustangs*.

The most difficult colony to attend of all those which composed our mission was Fredericksburg, situate a hundred miles north-west of San Antonio. The route is most dangerous on account of the ferocious Comanches bears, and rattlesnakes which abound there. Besides this it is cut up in different parts by torrents which it is necessary to cross sometimes by swimming. Otherwise the scenery is enchanting, picturesque, and mountainous. Before you reach the colony, you are obliged to pass through a little valley strewn with fragments of enormous rocks which seem to have been placed there by giant hands for the construction of a colossal temple. Near Fredericksburg is a mountain of white stone, soft as alabaster, of which the inhabitants make lustres and ornaments for chimney-pieces. The colony is composed of four thousand inhabitants, of whom two thousand are Roman Catholics. When the Abbé Dubuis went there in 1849, to prepare the Catholics for their paschal communion, he had the consolation to see almost all the Catholics of the town and neighbouring country approach the holy table with sentiments of the most tender piety.

When a missionary arrives in a town or village, his first care is to preach, and instruct the people, to teach the children their catechism, to prepare the children for their first communion, to administer the sacraments, and organise public prayers. The last day of his visit is consecrated to the general communion. At his departure, many females of that pious colony cast themselves at the feet of M. Dubuis, beseeching him not to

abandon them, but to return to his children as soon as possible; or at least to send them a priest that they may not die without the aids and consolations of religion. Alas! the good intentions of the missionaries are frequently unavailing. *The harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few.*

Thirty-five miles from Fredericksburg, towards the north, is the small colony called El Llano, from the river on which it is situated. The neighbourhood of this colony is rich in vegetation and game, wild turkeys and swans being very common.

When Abbé Dubuis left Fredericksburg he took the northern route leading to the Mormon settlement, instead of the southern route which would bring him to San Antonio. As soon as he perceived his error he changed his direction, without, at the same time, retracing his steps. This course was the longest, but safest under the circumstances. Journeying along he saw a wood of wild cherry trees, which was an important discovery, inasmuch as up to that time the existence of the wild cherry tree was unknown in Texas. Further on he crossed a prairie where rattlesnakes were in such numbers that his principal care was to prevent his horse from treading on them and being bitten. Then came a thick forest, through which he found it difficult to work a passage. Twice in the clearings he discovered traces of a recent encampment of Red Skins. Mules had been killed and eaten by these Indians; their bloody skeletons were lying near heaps of smouldering ashes. A kind of pathway which he followed conducted him to the steep bank of a broad river, which appeared to him to be the Colorado. For an instant he had the idea of abandoning his horse, swimming across the

river, and having climbed the opposite bank as well as he could, to continue his journey on foot. This plan, however, he renounced as being too difficult of execution; so putting his trust in God to direct his steps, he threw the reins on his horse's neck, and allowed the poor beast to choose the route he liked best. The horse, thus left to himself, brought him in less than an hour to a German farm-house, where he found a comfortable night's lodging. Hard by the farm was the route to San Antonio, which the Abbé pursued; and he arrived without accident the second day afterwards.

Whilst the Abbé Dubuis was journeying in the north, I was visiting the east in company with a French missionary, who had come to see us. I commenced with the two ancient Spanish missions of San José and Concepcion, which presented nothing but ruins. These missions are only two or three miles from San Antonio, and on a small river of the same name. The one is situate on the right bank, in the midst of a chaparal. The other, on the left bank, is hidden in a small wood, which completely covers it with its gigantic trees.

San José is still surrounded by a thick wall, which incloses one or two acres of land. Here rises a church of moderate size, beautiful in its proportions, rich in sculpture, with a graceful belfry. The entire façade is covered with arabesques and basso-relievos, which, unfortunately, have been defaced, broken, and maltreated in every way. The angels and saints too, in the niches, have been all mutilated by the shot of the Texians during the War of Independence. The doors and windows of the cloister and sacristy are richly ornamented with carvings in the style of the Renaissance. Time is doing its work gradually on the edifice; still

so powerful is the cement, that, unless aided by man's destructive hand, ages will roll on before they shall be able to separate one from another the stones of which it is constructed. The story goes, that this cement was mixed with the milk of cows and sheep; and hence its indestructibility. In the olden times the Spaniards confined their Indian prisoners in asylums of this kind, where they were instructed by the Franciscans in religion, agriculture, and various trades. The cabins of these Indians were built against the wall which surrounded the mission. Their descendants are, at the present day, established either at San Antonio, or on some other points along the river. At San José itself, only a few poor Indo-Mexican families remain, who cultivate a little maize. They live in the most shocking state of filth, and sleep at night near their wretched hovels, with the eternal cigarette ever in their hands. The vaults of the church, which in former times resounded with the hymns of divine praise, chanted by the full and powerful voices of the children of Texas, now-a-days hear nothing but the shrill squeaking of fabulous multitudes of dormice that have taken up their dwelling in these sacred ruins. Wide breaches in the walls give free access to wild beasts, Indians, and enormous waggons with their ponderous wheels, which are lazily dragged along by oxen. Seated under a fig-tree, with feelings of deep grief I contemplated this work of devastation, consummated rather by man than by length of ages. The trees, and the white stone in its framework of vine leaves and creeping plants, stood out in graceful relief against a sky of sapphire. My imagination repeopled these deserts, and restored to the mission that life with which it was heretofore

animated. I pictured to myself those ferocious Indians, rendered meek and docile by the teachings of Christianity, listening with attention to the instructions of poor monks, who, clad in sackcloth of penance, had come nine thousand miles to labour for the happiness and civilisation of idolaters whose life was spent in murder and pillage. Oh! it was then I appreciated the beautiful unselfishness of the Christian missionary! how I loved that pious devotedness, which the worldly man admires sometimes, but never understands. With him proselytism is the work of a morbidly restless, fanatic spirit; and not the natural consequence of profound conviction, and of a sincere and generous love for the most suffering and at the same time the most abandoned portion of the human family.

No doubt my companion also was indulging in similar reflections, in presence of the time-honoured ruins. He, too, viewed and admired them in silence. But we must depart. We crossed the San Antonio to visit Concepcion. The church is small and without ornament. The proximity of the river, and the coolness of the shades, must render Concepcion an agreeable retreat. We observed no wall. It had no doubt crumbled to ruin, and the high grass concealed every remaining vestige of it. A German farm-house is built against the church.

We left for San Antonio, and having reached the great square of the town, I was accosted by an American officer, a Catholic, whom I had known in the United States. He informed me that he was quartered at the camp of San Antonio, which had been formed at the source of the river of the same name; that he commanded the camp, which was composed of about two hundred soldiers, almost all Catholics and Irishmen;

and that in a few days they would be ordered to another station, eighty miles north of Austin, where, in all probability, they would not have the ministry of a priest for a long time. I promised to visit him next day, and prayed him to announce my intention to his soldiers.

Later in the day, I conducted my companion to a wooded hill to the east of San Antonio, where may be seen the ruins of a powder house, which would seem to be of comparatively recent date, and of Spanish construction. I should be inclined to think that this edifice had a more useful object than that of being the receptacle of a few barrels of powder. Most probably it was a fort which served as a watch tower whence to reconnoitre the movements of the Indians, and to protect the town.

These ruins commanded a most magnificent prospect. To the east a lovely landscape unfolded itself, diversified with plains and little eminences, and here and there were clumps of beautiful trees; rich pasturage, where herds of oxen, horses, and sheep roamed at large, where were scattered the mesquite and the oak in all its majesty. To the north the mountains and hills, which bound the horizon, are sufficiently near to enable you to admire the countless varieties of beauty. At one time you are struck with the forms, either graceful or fantastic, which they assume. Then again it is their rich tints, and ever-varying hues which excite your admiration. To the west, in a valley, lies the town of San Antonio, surrounded by a double row of brick cabins and reed huts, and intersected by a river, and by a small stream partially concealed by the foliage of Chinese lilacs. On the threshold of the

cabins, fires are lighted to cook the evening's repast, while women here and there are singing and smoking, young maidens dancing and gambolling about, men leaning listlessly against fig-trees, playing on the *mandoline* in pensive mood. These picturesque scenes form a framework of marvellous beauty for the white outline of the Moorish town, and the dome of the church, which presides as queen over the picture.

The sun was setting, but setting as he only sets in the tropics—gilding all nature—the heavens and the earth—with rays of gold. The azure of the firmament was disappearing amid dazzling floods of light. Trees and verdant plains, the city, the distant mountains, were lighted up as if by magic. The colours of the prism, warm and dazzling, covered all nature, whilst the great void was nought but fire and brightness. Sublime pictures, moving scenes, which remain eternally engraven on the hearts of those who appreciate them, but which human genius must fail to reproduce, either by language or pictorial art. *How great and wonderful are Thy works, O God!*

The next day my ministry called me to Braunfels, and as I should stop for a little at the camp of San Antonio, I warned my companion, who wished to accompany me, that we should set out before sunrise. Accordingly, next morning, scarcely had the first rays of light permitted us to distinguish objects around us, when we saddled our horses, and set off at a gallop. In those countries where there is no twilight, rosy-fingered Aurora is unknown. The sun rises so rapidly to the horizon, that the dawn has not time to light nature up by degrees from the obscurity of the night.

The morning was delightfully mild; the dew-drops

hung like pearls from the branches of the trees; the cardinal and mocking birds chattered their best; the golden humming-bird hummed and fluttered from flower to flower without ceasing; and I drank in happiness without reserve. It was a scene to inspire thoughts of happiness and gratitude to God.

After half-an-hour's fast riding, I arrived at the source of the San Antonio. The camp, constructed amphitheatrically, in an open space, presented a most pleasing appearance. The white tents were erected in two parallel lines, leaving in the middle an open space for military exercises. At the extremity of the camp were the quarters of the commandant, composed of two large and spacious tents; outside the lines were the provision stores, and the prison, constructed of planks of timber. The commandant liberated all the prisoners, as a mark of respect to us, and with the view of affording them every facility of profiting by our ministry. Seated on a chest of biscuits, I heard the soldiers' confessions for six hours: assisting the most feeble, as well as I was able, encouraging some, instructing others, giving counsel to all, and uttering nothing but words of peace and consolation. Many a tear of gratitude and love have I seen trickling down faces bronzed by the sun, and wrinkled by fatigues. The great majority of the Irish soldiers, constrained by dire necessity to embrace this career of toil and hardship, had been for many years without an opportunity of making their peace with God in the tribunal of confession. My companion aided me zealously in this work of charity.

I afterwards went to visit the source of the San Antonio, which springs from the midst of rocks a few

paces from the camp. These rocks are over-hung by oaks of immense size. The banks of the river are covered with an ever-green moss, and tall ferns. The water is so limpid, that the bottom of the river is distinctly visible, notwithstanding a depth of from ten to fifteen feet, and the continual bubbling up of small globules of air. When I returned to the camp, the soldiers were drawn up in two lines to receive my benediction. I told them that being obliged to go to Braunfels, it was quite impossible for me to make a longer stay among them, but that the following morning, a priest would come to offer up for them the adorable sacrifice of the Mass, and to deliver to them some instruction. Besides this, I promised to go to their new station, and to make a long stay there for the purpose of instructing those who had not as yet celebrated their first communion. An altar was erected with drums and the doors of the prison, in the middle of the camp. Next morning an Irish priest arrived, as I had promised; and the commandant and soldiers approached the holy table with feelings of happiness and tender piety.

My companion and I, having as yet thirty miles to travel before we could reach Braunfels, we did not wish to delay for breakfast. Having spoken a few words of exhortation to the soldiers, we started at a gallop. Having arrived at an intermitting river called the Tibolo, I fancied I saw some white figures through the trees, which immediately disappeared in the depths of the wood. My companion, too, perceived the same phantoms, and asked me what they were.

"I suspect they are Indians!" I replied, somewhat alarmed.

"What a treat to me, who have never seen an Indian! I should be most happy to see them."

"For my part, I don't at all desire it. You are not aware that last October, two Germans were murdered on the very spot on which we now are, on their journey from Braunfels to San Antonio."

"Bah! you only say that to terrify me? What business could Indians have here?"

"To hunt. Game abounds in the neighbourhood of these watercourses. So let us not be imprudent: when danger presents itself, whether real or imaginary, we should try to avoid it. Follow me, and do as I do."

I proceeded slowly, taking care not to stir the branches of the trees as I went along. Having reached the river, which was dried up, I discovered a deep hollow, large enough to conceal our horses. In an instant we were there—our horses unsaddled and cropping the herbage—and we ourselves reposing at full length on the green sward.

"By this forced halt," said I to my companion, "we shall have time to read our Breviary and take a little rest. It will also allow the Indians to keep ahead of us, if Indians they be."

"All very good. But meantime we shall die of hunger and thirst."

"My good friend, a twenty-four hours' fast will not kill us. This I know by experience. As to the scalp—why it is quite another thing; a scalp is really an indigestible affair."

Just as we were about to begin the Divine office, I saw opposite to me, and hung from a tree, the bloody skeleton of a deer. No doubt about it, the Indians had camped on this very spot. Near a tree

was a heap of white ashes, with the fire still smouldering in them.

I have remarked that in those countries where deer abound, the Americans, when they kill an animal, only remove the legs and shoulders; the Mexicans take the whole carcass, except the head; the Europeans take the entire carcass, leaving nothing; while the Indians eat the flesh, carry off the skin, and leave what then remains to the wolves and vultures. Thus my fears were well grounded. It was, nevertheless, comfortable to reflect that all Indians do not scalp; besides we were very hungry, and had a long journey before us.

After a halt of more than an hour and a half, we resumed our journey at an easy pace, to spare the horses. I was very uneasy, and from time to time looked back with very unenviable feelings at the sun, which was rapidly approaching the horizon. My companion suffered terribly from thirst. He never ceased inquiring whether we should soon come to a stream of water. To divert our minds from our sufferings and gloomy forebodings, I made an effort to sing, but the words died away on my lips; at length we reached the long wished-for rivulet; we heard it bubbling at a few paces from the path; but night had already thrown a thick mantle over surrounding objects. My companion was about to alight from his horse, but I restrained him. I had discerned a group of men, stretched at the foot of a neighbouring tree, some naked, and others partially covered with white calico. Near them lay bows and rifles, and at a few yards' distance, their horses were cropping the grass of the clearing.

"Here are the Indians," said I to my companion; "don't alight."

"I must alight," he replied, "I am dying of thirst."

"Well then go to them," said I, "and ask in Spanish for some water. In the event of their making a move towards their guns, I say take to flight at once; it is night, and they are on foot, we do not therefore run much risk."

An Indian was coming from the rivulet with water in a calabash. My companion went straight to him, and asked him to allow him to drink. The Indian handed him the calabash, and my companion enjoyed a most delicious draught. One of the Indians inquired of me where we intended camping. I answered at Braunfels. After a delay of a few minutes, we started off at a gallop, delighted to have escaped so well. These Indians were probably either Lipans or Delawares.

It was eleven o'clock at night when we reached Braunfels, and the fires of the town were extinguished. I knocked at the cabin of an Alsacian, where I was to remain for the night, and a little boy, with a very scanty covering indeed, opened it. His parents were absent, but they were to return next day. We entered, having previously installed our horses in the outer yard, with a plentiful supply of maize before them. I asked for something to eat. There was not a morsel of food of any kind in the house. My throat was all on fire, and my lips chapped and bleeding as though it were the midst of winter. There was no help for it, so having swallowed some mouthfuls of water, and wrapped myself in my blanket, I stretched myself on the ground, and slept most profoundly. My companion did the same. He left me next day to go to his mission, and I remained two days at Braunfels, very busy indeed.

Braunfels is the most important German colony in

Texas. Its prosperity increases every day, and its population is above six hundred. A great portion of the community is Catholic. At some distance from the town there are other German settlements, but of very minor importance. Although Braunfels is beautifully situated for a colony, still the surrounding country is chiefly remarkable for its agricultural advantages.

Natural curiosities abound in this part of Texas. A rich German, Herr Claupenbach, possesses magnificent collections. Although a Protestant, he received me with great affability; and after showing me his museum, he conducted me to the source of the Comal, a small river which runs through the town, and sets in motion the machinery of its grinding and sawing mills. These springs are well worth a visit. They burst from the hill, then dash among rocks into a wood, and furnish a volume of water not less than four feet in depth and twenty-five in breadth, very limpid, and of a most delicious flavour. In the dry bed of a torrent, at the bottom of a deep gorge formed of limestone rocks, which afford shelter to wild beasts, I saw very curious crystallisations, and found a large white flint of such purity and brilliance, that I mistook it for rock-crystal. I also found a portion of loadstone as large as a hen's egg. Violet crystallisations which resemble amethysts, are found on the elevated plateau which protects Braunfels from the north winds; also beautiful and rare flowers, which brave the most intense heat. Here, too, is seen a small conical hill, which has all the characters of a volcanic eruption, and which bears a very close resemblance to the hill near the camp of the Leona.

Despite all misadventures these excursions have their

interest. I have frequently seen a prairie on fire, a sight which novelists represent as grand and terrible. For my own part, I was disappointed in the reality. Every year the farmers set fire to the dry grass to destroy insects, and prepare the land for a new crop. Fire and smoke travel so quickly as completely to remove from the scene everything of an imposing character. At night that long and brilliant line of fire which rushes on so rapidly, is curious to behold, but it never rises more than a few feet from the earth. Reptiles easily escape by hiding themselves in holes. Animals have been described as terrified by these conflagrations, and as escaping in the wildest manner, and howling with dismay. This is at least an exaggeration. I have seen deer browsing tranquilly within a few yards of the fire, and then bounding over it when it approached them too closely. Herds of oxen and horses retire before it with great composure, and like the deer, leap over it, when necessary. The burned plains wear a melancholy, dreary aspect for a fortnight or so, but as soon as a little rain falls, the grass shoots up through the white and black cinders, and again clothes the earth as in its beauteous mantle of spring.

CHAP. IV.

THE CHOLERA. — SCENES MORE FRIGHTFUL TO BEHOLD THAN EASY TO DESCRIBE. — A STRONG REMEDY. — RODRIGUEZ AND HIS SONS. — LYNCH LAW. — QUARREL ABOUT A HEN. — A FALL. — HOW THE LONGEST ROADS ARE SOMETIMES THE BEST AND THE SHORTEST. — MELANCHOLY. — A FISHING PARTY, AND AN AQUATIC EXCURSION. — THE MANIAC OF THE MEDINA. — A PHANTOM.

This nomade life was ease and tranquillity itself, when compared with the terrible trials to which the cholera subjected us. At San Antonio as at Castroville, the epidemic made dreadful ravages. My day was spent in running from one bed to another, and from the church to the grave-yard. I saw nothing but agony, and death, and burials; I had hardly time to take my ordinary meals. Calls were incessant, so that I was constantly employed in dispensing remedies, as well as in consoling and praying for the dying. Charles M——, the young Frenchman of whom I before spoke, fortunately took upon himself the task of supporting us by his gun, and of otherwise providing for our material necessities. I should not have been able to compass everything, for I was alone, M. Dubuis not having as yet returned from his mission in the north and east, where the epidemic was also doing its work of destruction. I performed the duties of nurse-tender; executed the prescriptions of the doctor, administered potions and frictions; in short, I was occupied with body and soul at the same time.

I was not always successful in curing the body; but it frequently happened that a moribund rising in revolt against his sufferings, and struggling with violence in his tortures, has been pacified by my words, listened to me, and even in the midst of convulsions, which shook and distorted his countenance, seized my hand in sign of gratitude and resignation. Then I conveyed him to the grave-yard, as horrifying a spectacle to behold as the cholera itself, for wolves and foxes, attracted thither by the odour of the dead bodies, ransacked and violated the tombs.

One day I said to Charles that I should go next morning to pay a short visit to the cholera-patients of San Antonio. He therefore resolved to profit by my absence to hunt panthers; but next morning I was awaked at an early hour by a severe pain in my throat; my whole neck was swollen; and two tiny black spots led me to suppose that I had been stung by a venemous insect. I was confirmed in this opinion by the presence of a large tarantula which I discovered on the ground. Notwithstanding that, I lost no time in washing the bites with liquid ammoniac, still, when I mounted my horse, half my body was paralysed. Seeing this, Charles would not hear of my proceeding alone on my journey, and so he accompanied me. Now the horse I rode on the occasion had cost me the sum of fifteen francs, and even at that price I had been mercilessly cheated. We took nine hours to go to San Antonio; and to perform the journey even within this time, I was constrained to ride a part of the way with my face to the animal's tail, and to belabour him incessantly with a huge staff. Charles, being similarly armed, aided me in this laborious task. When I arrived at San Antonio my

disorder had so increased that I was unable to move a limb. Having no money to fee a surgeon, I begged of my companion to make some incisions in my neck with his penknife. The operation gave me great relief. I therefore repeated it, and continued cauterising the wounds with ammoniac until I was completely cured.

San Antonio, which a few days before was so gay, so crowded with people, and so full of life, was now silent as the grave. The streets were deserted, and the church bells no longer tolled the ordinary; had they done so, the tolling would have been continuous night and day. The parish priest could find no time even to say mass. One third of the population had fled, and were camped in the woods, along rivers and watercourses. Another portion shut themselves up in their cabins, whence arose cries, and wailings, and supplications to God for mercy; while a third part were in the throes and agonies of death. We met no one in the streets, save those who were carrying off the dead. Coffins were scarce, and the dead were in many instances strapped to dried ox-hides, and thus dragged along, all livid and purple, to their graves. It happened not unfrequently that one of those who dragged them along, was suddenly struck down by the scourge, and after writhing an instant or two, expired by the side of the corpse. In a short time the malady pursued the fugitives to the banks of the rivers, or into the depths of the woods, and these silent retreats were thus made witnesses of heart-rending scenes, and horrifying spectacles of men dying alone and unaided in the midst of the wilderness. For six weeks did the epidemic rage with undiminished intensity. The preservation of the parish priest's life during all that time was something wonderful, if not truly miraculous.

By what means did he succeed in maintaining life for six weeks without sleep, with an insufficiency of food, and in the midst of continual fatigue? The wondering population exclaimed: "It is God alone that sustains him." And they spoke truth. It was his reward and recompense; for, of all the ministers of the various sects then in San Antonio, the good priest was the only one who braved danger to succour his people.

The same evening I returned to Castroville upon my ten-shilling horse. O memorable night! The sun was already above the horizon when I arrived. Abbé Dubuis returned next day, having travelled that evening from San Antonio to Castroville alone and on foot, for he had not been able to procure a horse. While proceeding on his journey at a slow pace, on account of the darkness, and drenched to the skin by the incessant rain, two horsemen accosted him as to whether they were in reality on the right road to Castroville, and whether they were likely to arrive that night.

"Certainly," said the Abbé, "for you are on horseback. I myself expect, although on foot, to arrive there by two o'clock in the morning."

One of the two travellers invited the Abbé to mount behind him. He accepted the invitation, and in return offered them the hospitality of our little house. This was doing them a real service, as there was no inn at Castroville, and it being late at night, no one would open his door to them. These travellers were Germans of the sect of Ronge, and had come to purchase oxen to convey their luggage to California.

It was two o'clock in the morning when Charles and

I were awaked by the Abbé and his two companions. We at once made a good fire to dry them. Next morning one of the Germans went out, the other remained bent over the fire, taciturn, and seeming ill at ease. His eyes were haggard and cavernous, and his complexion livid. After breakfast he went out with Charles, but returned in a short time supported by the latter and the mason whom I had heard sing, from my skylight, on the occasion of my first arrival in San Antonio. His cheeks were sunken, his eyes glassy, his gaze fixed and vacant: he had cholera. I laid him on my bed, and ran for the doctor.

"Do you feel much pain?" asked the doctor on his arrival.

"No!" replied the patient, while a cold sweat covered his whole body.

"He is a dead man," said the doctor, in a whisper to me. "I shall order him a potion, you will perform the friction, but all will be useless."

We apprised his friend, who sternly refused to see him. The Abbé, Charles, and myself succeeded each other in tending him and watching by his bedside, each in turn for three hours. In the evening he often inquired the hour, and spoke to himself a few incoherent, unintelligible words; and at midnight he expired. The night was dark, the rain fell in torrents, the body emitted a fetid, intolerable odour; in vain we burned paper, powder, and sugar; all would not do; we could stand it no longer, and therefore conveyed the remains to the schoolroom, placed them in a large box in readiness for the morrow; and then, notwithstanding the infected air, we fell asleep, utterly exhausted with fatigue and want of repose. In the morning the body was re-

moved; but all three of us felt indisposed; pains in the head and stomach, nausea, and cramps were unmistakable symptoms of the nature of our disease. The doctor lived too far away to give us timely assistance, so we resolved on prescribing for ourselves. A glass goblet was accordingly filled with camphorated alcohol, laudanum, unground pepper, and eau-de-cologne; this mixture was strained through a thin linen cloth, and then divided into three equal parts, of which each drank off one. It is not my intention to recommend this remedy to any person. As to myself I fancied that I had swallowed burning coals; and that my whole body was on fire. A copious perspiration followed; then sleep, which rendered us motionless for twenty-four hours. On waking, we felt greatly relieved and strengthened; the new medicine had effected our cure, and the next day each resumed his ordinary occupation.

In thanksgiving for our recovery, I offered up the adorable sacrifice of the mass, and during the service a choir of Mexicans chanted a slow, monotonous hymn, but withal harmonious and full of pathos. When I returned home, the singers, four in number, came to pay me a visit. They were one Rodriguez and his three sons who had come to Castroville in search of cattle which had strayed away from their owners. Rodriguez is an old man of primitive faith and piety; and his high sense of justice and honour is proverbial; though his worldly means are small. His twelve stalwart sons seemed all to be above twenty-five years of age. When Rodriguez assists at mass he never fails to chant one of those hymns in a voice full of tenderness and feeling. At San Antonio, these chants became very popular, and the voice of the Christian bard was

generally accompanied in church by the whole congregation.

Rodriguez had in the neighbourhood of San Antonio, a farm, which he cultivated with his twelve sons, who were the best breakers-in of *mustangs* in those countries. If a horse, or an ox, or any other animal, went astray, immediate application was made to Rodriguez and his sons, and the missing beast was soon forthcoming. They never claimed any remuneration for the service rendered, but left it quite optional with you whether you paid them or not: they looked to God for a higher and better recompense. Like the anchorites of the Thebaide, every year the sons of Rodriguez spent, in rotation, some days in the woods in prayer, fasting, and singing, with the birds, canticles of praise and thanksgiving to the God of nature. During these days of retirement they lived on ebony leaves, Barbary figs, and wild roots. As these twelve men had received confirmation from the hands of our good bishop on the day of my ordination, I thought a short notice of them deserved a place in my journal.

At length, thanks to God, the cholera gave us a little breathing time, and though a dreadful scourge, it rendered us a most unexpected service in freeing us from the Indians, who had been decimated by it as mercilessly as we ourselves had been, and who, perhaps, fancying that the plague had been spread among them by the whites, made on that account fewer visits to our country. Up to that time their presence was a perpetual source of alarm, as they made numerous victims.

Our cemetery, as I have already mentioned, had no protection against the wild beasts, which accordingly paid

it frequent visits, so that it presented a most revolting spectacle. It was situated on a gentle eminence about an English mile from Castroville. On the route, as you turned a little to the left, there was a large oak, near which there is a grave, in connexion with which there is a story as revolting as the cemetery itself. As it serves to illustrate the manners of the New World, I shall relate it.

One evening four men set out on foot from Castroville to San Antonio; three of them were colonists, and the fourth, M. Dubuis. The Abbé left his companions in the plains, where they purposed passing the night, while he pursued his journey to San Antonio. Next morning, a dispute arose amongst them, and one of the colonists was murdered by the other two. The most guilty was a Swiss Calvinist. Encouraged by the absence of anything like duly organised judicial tribunals, he entered Castroville unapprehensive of consequences; but the rumour of the crime which he had perpetrated, had preceded him. As soon as he arrived, the sheriff, assisted by some drunken fellows, seized, bound, and condemned him to death in the very public-house where they had been drinking. Still, whether it was owing to a feeling of shame, or with a view of lightening their responsibility as judges and executioners, by causing the whole population to share in the act, they sent round a paper with a view of obtaining influential names as a sanction of the sentence. In less than half-an-hour the document was covered with signatures. The whole population then assembled, and the murderer was conveyed to the foot of a tree near the cemetery. Along the way, they asked him if he wished to see his wife

and children; but he answered "No," and demanded some whiskey. Arrived at the fatal spot, the butcher, who was the executioner on the occasion, put the rope round his neck, and was preparing to hang him, when the ex-schoolmaster, the sacristan of whom I have already spoken, arrested his arm, and exhorted the people to kneel down and pray God for the criminal's soul; and setting the example himself, the old man recited in a loud voice five *paters* and five *aves*, to which the crowd responded in accents of deep emotion. These prayers being recited, the schoolmaster resumed: "Now let us offer up a prayer to the Blessed Virgin, that she may intercede with God for the repose of the soul of this wretched man." To which the latter replied in a tone of contempt, —

"I'd like to know how the Virgin can serve me at this moment."

"Ah!" says the butcher, "you don't know, don't you? Well, we'll try to do something for you." And casting the rope over a branch of the tree, at the same instant, aided by some men of his own calling, he launched the wretched man into eternity. The crowd retired in silence, somewhat affected by this act of summary justice. I never passed by this tree without experiencing a shudder of horror at the recollection of the drama of which it had been the witness.

One night, while I slept profoundly after the fatigues of the day, I was roused by loud and repeated knocks at the door. I rose in haste, and having opened the door, was accosted by a youth of eighteen, and his sister, who entreated me to come and administer the last sacrament to one of their brothers, who had been murdered by the eldest son of the family. I said to them:

"But if he is dead, he can have no need of my ministry."

"No. He is still alive."

"Where do you live?"

"At a *rancho* (farm), near the San Hyeronimo."

Now the prospect of journeying eighteen miles, after one o'clock in the morning, through a country infested with Indians, rattlesnakes, and wild beasts, was in no wise agreeable; nevertheless, refusal was out of the question; go I must. I took the holy oils for extreme unction, elixir for the wounds, and a pair of pistols which Charles gave me, saying, "You will need them, believe me." I did believe him, and set out.

Two horses were in readiness: one of them had no bridle, the other was without a saddle. I selected the horse without the bridle, and set off at a gallop. I ascertained, as we proceeded, that the two brothers had quarrelled about a hen, to which each laid claim, and that the eldest, a maniac, in a paroxysm rushed on his brother, and felled him to the earth with two blows of a hatchet. The brother who had been struck, had lost his right hand the year before, while shooting; and, two years previously, the maniac had stabbed himself with a knife in the abdomen. We arrived at the *rancho* without accident; and guided by traces of blood, we entered the cabin where the unfortunate young man lay. He was stretched on a bed, bathed in his blood, and breathing heavily, with his forehead bound round with a bloody handkerchief. I asked him if he knew me. He could not speak, but made a sign of recognition. Having, therefore, motioned the others to retire, I heard his confes-

sion in the manner usual under such circumstances, and administered to him the sacrament of extreme unction.

Two candles, shedding a flickering light through the cabin, a dying man stretched on a pallet, a priest praying for him and consoling him, form a very simple picture, but one which has been frequently repeated during my life. And still, under the cabin's roof, in the wilderness, far from the bustle of cities, I have ever considered this picture as a very sublime one; it never failed to make the deepest impression upon me. The grief of families and friends is frequently selfish, and always inopportune as regards the man on the brink of the grave. Religion, his best friend, his consolation and firmest support, watches over him, and encourages him on his death-bed, while nature is able to do little more than suffer and weep. It was thus I regarded things in this terrible moment, while very often a pressure of the hand, a look of farewell and gratitude, into which the dying man threw his entire soul, proved to me the justness of my convictions.

I had not terminated the sacred unction, when the fratricide stalked into the room to deal his brother a determined finishing blow. In an instant I snatched up a pistol, and levelling it at his breast, ordered him to retire, which he did with a very bad grace. After the ceremony, I examined the wound in the head, which was very large, but not at all difficult to cicatrize, and dressed it as well as I could. One of the ears had been cut off. I then raised the handkerchief which covered the wound on his breast, but, horror-struck, I let it fall again; the unfortunate man had received near the heart a blow of a hatchet, which, after smashing two ribs,

cut one of the lungs in two. The wound was five inches in length, and at least four in depth. I returned without delay to Castroville, to apprise the doctor; but he was absent, and could not attend the wounded man for at least four days. Six months afterwards, I returned to the same *rancho*, and met a man walking in the farm-yard, pale and tottering in his gait; I asked his name, and found it was the same I had anointed, and believed to have been dead for the last six months. To be sure he was a German, and had the life of a cat.

But the apostolic journeyings of a missionary do not always end without accident. Before my arrival at Castroville, Abbé Dubuis was obliged to go to Dhanis, to visit the sick, and baptize the children. The Indians were on his route, and he durst not face the danger on foot; hence he mounted a *mustang* mule, which determined to unseat him in the middle of the plain. For a full hour and a half he struggled with all his might to keep his seat in the midst of brush-wood and stumps of trees, against which he broke his spurs and stirrups; but the mule became every instant more unmanageable, until, at last, the bridle snapped; an instant now was sufficient to hurl him to the ground. For three days he was obliged to keep his bed, or rather the blanket which supplied its place. A good old woman brought him a pillow of maize-leaves, to soothe his aching head, while the doctor took some ounces of blood from his arm. Eight days afterwards he was still suffering from the effects of the fall.

One morning, just having returned from a night visit after preparing a person for death, a dragoon rode up to my door to request me to go to the camp on the Medina to perform the funeral service of one

of his comrades who had been killed by accident. The camp was situated about fourteen miles from Castroville, and at a greater distance than the San Hyeronimo. I again mounted my horse to traverse a part of the same route which I had passed over only a few hours before.

The way is very beautiful, but, as I have already said, is very dangerous on account of the serpents, panthers, and Indians, who come to hunt in the neighbourhood. After having crossed the San Hyeronimo and the San Miguel, which are two small rivulets containing scarcely any water, I entered into a narrow gorge which runs between two beautiful wooded hills of graceful and picturesque aspect. This gorge widens by degrees, the hills retire from each other, and then sweep round a small prairie planted with old stunted mesquites. Nature in this district seems to have been expressly formed for the Red Skins; its wild eccentricities of form and colour seize the heart, and strike the imagination. I expected every instant to see the savage figure of an Indian spring from the matted grass or thick underwood, ready to let fly at me his murderous arrows.

We diverged from the route at a place where the ground suddenly sinks, on the verge of the Medina, along whose banks extended the camp, entirely concealed by enormous trees. After the funeral ceremony, I visited, in company with the commandant, and under a strong escort, the curiosities of the neighbourhood. The principal of these were a tree and a grotto. The tree was a giant pine, which, at three yards from the ground, measured twenty-seven English feet in circumference. The grotto appeared to me to be an ancient confederation

of numerous republics of bees; for the immense quantity of honey and wax, which it still contained, was such that a lance driven almost all its length into it, did not touch the bottom. This colossal hive appeared to have been abandoned for a long while.

On my way back to Castroville I resolved to cut right across the mountains to avoid that long monotonous plain which I had thrice traversed in less than twelve hours. I thought too by this means to shorten the length of my journey. But I soon discovered that the straightest road is not always the shortest. I crossed at a gallop the hill which seemed to me of easiest ascent, but all at once I found myself, as it were, on the first step of a gigantic terrace formed of little hills of some hundreds of feet in height. As I rode a mustang horse which cleared all obstacles like a chamois, I soon reached the highest point, on an immense plateau overlooking that chain of mountains which sink gradually as they approach the Gulf of Mexico, but which towards the north-west increase gradually in height until they effect a junction with the Rocky Mountains. Distant a few miles from this is a small lake difficult of access, to which troops of mustangs, oxen, and deer come to drink; and it is also the favourite resort of the domestic animals, which have wandered away from their owners, and which, having reached this lake, never afterwards leave its vicinity, but become wild.

This plateau was a magnificent observatory; and the prospect it commanded, seemed to extend to infinity. It was covered with flowers, some of which were surpassingly beautiful from the brilliance of their colours. The trees were few and stunted; for the north wind, which continually sweeps these summits, prevents luxu-

riant vegetation; and such trees as had resisted this cutting wind were half broken, and bore traces of the fury of the tempest.

All these hills and mountains which lay between me and Castroville were cut up with deep ravines hollowed out by the tropical rains, and were, for the most part, impassable, and so dangerous that I was constrained to ride round them. Thus wasting much time, and worried to death by these obstacles, I became more and more impatient and heedless of danger; so much so that on many occasions I was nearly rolling down with my horse into the yawning abysses beneath. My carelessness of danger had almost cost me my life. Having to descend a ravine about a hundred feet in depth, and fearing lest my horse should fall upon me were I to lead him by the bridle, I remained in the saddle, and thus reached the bottom of the precipice uninjured; but as to escalading the other side, which rose like a wall before me, my horse proved himself unequal to the task after many bootless attempts. Unwilling to remain for ever in the ravine, I made a last effort, let go the bridle, and with voice, whip, and spur urged on the horse. The animal became furious, and started off holding himself almost quite upright against the perpendicular embankment; and at the same instant I felt a most intense pain in the region of the epigastrium: it was the pommel of the saddle which had given me a frightful contusion. I thought I should have died, for the blood was flowing from my mouth; yet to prevent myself from falling I was obliged to cling to the mane of my gallant steed, which at last surmounted the precipice.

My pains were intense, and I was still a long way from Castroville; yet somehow I arrived at last in a

dying state, and thoroughly penetrated with the conviction that the longest roads are often the best.

We were dining one day on our last piece of smoked pork, which the summer heat had tainted, so that it had become quite maggoty, and, notwithstanding the cooking, its colour no less than its flavour was most disgusting. I felt an utter loathing against this decomposed meat. Abbé Dubuis, with the view of encouraging me, told me it tasted like ripe pear, while Charles, on the other hand, produced an empty match-box, which he placed near his plate with the utmost gravity. I asked him what the box was for. "To fill it," he replied, "with these little creatures, which I shall preserve as bait for fishing." I strove to imitate the stoical indifference of my companions, and enjoy their jokes; and, cutting my portion into small bits, I covered them, as was my wont, with pepper; then dipping each morsel in vinegar, I swallowed it as best I might, making all kinds of grimaces the while, to the great amusement of my companions.

There were days when I felt sad—morally prostrate, if not quite disheartened, and this too although I was wont to apply for strength at the foot of the crucifix of our little chapel. Man's natural strength is but limited, and his trials seem to increase at every step through life. When in this distressed state of mind, I used to stretch myself in my hammock, with my face heavenward, contemplating the void; and thus I would indulge in reveries at once sad and aimless, while unbidden tears would start to my eyes, and sighs oppress my heart, and my gaze would naturally turn towards that point where the sun rises, for there it was I had left father-land and all those whom I loved.

At twenty-four the heart is still full of affection, even

though it be the heart of a missionary. Indeed, it may be said that the priest in these distant missions has two individualities,—the one purely spiritual and Christian, causing him to raise his heart and eyes towards Heaven to obtain strength, courage, and assistance wherewith to discharge his laborious and toilsome duties; the other all human and weak, rendering his sensibility to the voice of nature more marked, and making his heart bound with joy at the sweet names of country, family, and friends. Although these two individualities are nothing but the ordinary struggle between the man and the Christian, still they fail not to throw one into great lassitude of body and spirit. Some there are who, seeing nothing to fear in this interior struggle, allow themselves to waver between their thoughts and their reveries, which are not always without a certain charm, and thus await in all resignation the end of the storm. Others on the contrary, and doubtless the more virtuous class, by means of prayer and strength of purpose, at once put an end to this contest, which might be a temptation after all. Oh! how happy are those who pass from their mother's side to the benches of the schools, and thence to the cell of the seminary, to enter the priesthood without having made any halt on the ways of life, and without having ever seen their little bark carried off by the tempest, and buffeted by the fierce waves of the world.

I was in one of those days of combat, of vague sadness and reverie; Charles perceived it, and in order to cheer me he showed his match-box full of maggots for bait, and proposed that we should go on a fishing excursion. Although I have no more taste for this amusement than I have for hunting, still I felt very grateful to him for

his kind intention, and accepted the offer. We started for the Medina, each provided with a bad line. After an hour and a half of complete immobility, Charles had caught an old shoe and a black serpent; but as for myself I had taken a kind of tortoise peculiar to those countries, and a horrid frog with a long tail, which jumped about on the sand bank of the river. Our amusement waxing somewhat monotonous, we proposed a boating excursion on the river. Near where we stood was an old leaky boat, with but one oar, belonging to an acquaintance of ours. Charles took the solitary oar to direct the boat, while my hat served to bail out the water which came rushing through the chinks and crevices. Thus equipped we started. In this place the Medina flowed in a narrow channel under an enormous canopy of trees. We followed slowly the current of the river, singing as we glided —

"Vogue, vogue, oh! ma balancelle," &c.

The boating was really preferable to the fishing excursion. The Medina gradually widened until at length it formed a vast oval basin very deep, which the enormous nut-trees overshadowed with difficulty. The azure of the sky sparkled through the foliage of the trees; on the banks, the long slender stems of the high grass, and the graceful plumes of the fern, inclined gently towards the water as if to admire their frail beauty in nature's mirror; a light breeze played through the trees like the distant echo of our song; the bird of paradise, the mocking-bird, the cardinal, and the blue bird seemed by their notes and joyous sports to return thanks to the Creator for having given them existence; grey and red squirrels added to the animation of the

calm, moderate heat and serenity enchanted and refreshed me in a most singular manner after the fatigues of the day. Towards midnight I was awaked by the tinklings of the little bell of the chapel, — measured tinklings, sweet, and silvery. I listened attentively in great amazement. It could not be the breeze, for it was so light that it would scarcely have agitated the leaf of the aspen. Who, then, could be thus ringing at an hour when all nature reposed and was asleep in the cabins and in the woods? Immediately behind me, in the direction of Abbé Chazelle's grave, I heard, in a tongue unintelligible to me, a melody full of pathos and harmony, resembling the slow, solemn modulations of a religious chant. For a moment I fancied I was dreaming, and carried to the midnight office of some Carthusian cloister. The vibration of the little bell, and the voice, were borne languidly into space by the zephyr of the night, like the emanation of a sweet perfume. These melodious, mysterious accents went to my heart; and though convinced that I was quite awake, I durst not rise lest I should penetrate the mystery. I enjoyed, as I should delicious fruit, these harmonious, melancholy notes, which found a responsive echo in my heart. At the end of an hour the chanting ceased, the bell tinkled no longer, and silence resumed her sway once more.

The next day a woman from the town came to inquire why it was that I performed a night service at the grave of Abbé Chazelle? I entreated her to explain herself. She told me how she had been awakened by the bell; how she observed lights on the grave, and the figure of a man on his knees in the attitude of prayer. As to the chant, she was at too

great a distance to have heard it. The following night, at the same hour, I was again aroused by the tinkling of the bell, and the chant only differed from that of the preceding night in this, that its modulation was sadder and more solemn. After having listened a long time to the melody, I decided on finding out who this mysterious chanter was, and rising without noise, I quietly approached the grave, at each of the four corners of which a wax taper was burning. At the foot of the cross I clearly discerned the form of a man in a kneeling posture. It was the maniac of the Medina, as he was called, a colonist of about thirty years of age, whom the execution of the Swiss had so affected that he lost his reason. But as his folly was confined to harmless eccentricities, he was allowed to be at large in the town, where he walked frequently through the streets, chanting his lays at every hour, day and night. He had a very good voice, and his chants were generally funereal and religious. I approached him, and begged of him to go home to bed. The poor maniac, with a sweet smile on his lips, obeyed me without hesitation, saying, *Ya, ya, young Herr Pfarrer* (Yes, yes, young priest). Henceforward the night chants ceased, but I confess that I often regretted their discontinuance.

Extraordinary scenes were by no means rare in these countries. There was a colonist who, I think, had committed murder in Europe; but though his crime remained hidden from the eyes of justice, his conscience continually reminded him of it. Every night he fancied he beheld the ghost of the murdered man standing by his bed. When he lighted a candle, the ghost disappeared. Hoping to rid himself of this constant pursuit on the part of the ghost, he emigrated to Texas, but

in Texas, as in Europe, the ghost returned every night, and disappeared when a candle was lighted; and hence the unfortunate man was at last obliged to have a candle lighted all night, as thus only could he enjoy a little rest. When I passed by his cabin at night, and saw the light glimmering through the chinks of the reed wall, I could not refrain from shuddering, and pitying the wretched being. Doubtless remorse and a disordered imagination were the sole causes of his vision.

CHAP. V.

THE INDIANS. — SANTA ANNA. — A TRAGEDY. — THE COMANCHES. — THE LIPANS. — A GERMAN PRIEST AND THE RED SKINS. — ADVENTURES OF A MEXICAN WOMAN. — MURDER OF FOUR COLONISTS BY THE INDIANS. — CIVILISATION OF THE INDIANS. — SHORT REVIEW OF AMERICAN EDUCATION. — EXTREME UNCTION ADMINISTERED WITH GREASE. — CAMP MEETINGS. — PREACHERS IN PETTICOATS.

In the north and west of Texas, the Indians are very numerous; and the most savage, as well as the most important tribe, is that of the Comanches. It is also the tribe which is most to be feared, for it is said to number 40,000 warriors. But who can prove the fact? The Apaches and the Navajos come sometimes on hunting-excursions to Texas, but they remain generally in New Mexico, in the neighbourhood of Paso-del-Norte and the State of Sonora. The Lipans, the Cathos, the Wakos, and the Delawares, are inconsiderable in number and by no means formidable. There are at the present day, on the banks of the Rio Grande, round the gulf and on the east of Texas, some groups of Manzos (good) Indians, remnants or sections of tribes.

Although the Indians are nomades by nature and necessity, they have nevertheless establishments where they sometimes sojourn for a certain period of years. The warriors in this case spend their time in hunting as long as the game lasts, and the remaining portion of the tribe dwell quietly at their encampment, employing themselves in domestic concerns, the men doing little or nothing, the women waiting on the men and

doing all the work. During such times they prepare their arrows from knife-blades and iron-rings, always pointing them with flint; and make spears by firmly binding a sword to a long pole, ornamented with carvings, feathers, and horse hair. It is also during such resting time, that the skins of deer, buffaloes, and wild beasts are tanned and made into garments; and sometimes they even till the ground. When a tribe captures prisoners, a thing of rare occurrence, the latter cultivate the soil, aided by the domestic animals which have been stolen from the neighbouring towns. The Lipans encamped a long time near Castroville and the adjacent colonies. The thousands of bleached skeletons of all kinds of animals which are met with at every step in the plains and woods show that game abounded here, and that the Indians committed dreadful havoc among them.

At Fredericksburg, the Comanches, the Apaches, the Lipans, and the other tribes engaged in traffic with the colonists. They brought horses and the skins of tigers, panthers, and bears, the skins of the deer, buffalo, and swan, which they exchanged for brandy, knives, tin, blankets, Venetian pearls, red stuff, and cast-off gold lace. In the neighbourhood of the Llano, where strangers durst not approach for fear of being scalped, were two Comanch villages, which probably do not exist at present. These villages were composed of tents formed of buffalo hides, and ranged in something like hierarchical order, the chief's tent being in the middle, and immediately round it the warriors', while the rest of the tribe formed the periphery. The two chiefs were, Santa Anna, who died of cholera in 1849, and Bufalo-Hunt, notorious for his cruelties. These chiefs

were paid a small sum in tobacco and other merchandise, to secure their good-will towards the settlements on the Llano and Fredericksburg; and the consequence was, that while the other colonies were scourged by the Indians, the Llano and Fredericksburg establishments were not molested in any way whatever.

Near these two camps, a little northward, rises the Peak of the Comanches, covered over and sparkling with crystallised quartz, in the form of a colossal sugar-loaf, which on sunny days blazes like the diamond. This is a spot chosen by the Indians for devotional purposes: here they assemble to smoke piously through the hollow handles of their axes, sending one puff towards the sun, and another towards the earth, and singing the while a monotonous, rhythmical chant until a late hour of the night. When amid the darkness appears the pale glare of the Indian fires, and when at the same time these melancholy and solemn notes are borne on the breeze, mingled with the crackling of leaves and the distant sound of the torrent, feelings of ineffable charm spring up in the soul; and this poetic emotion is not a little heightened by the possibility, if not by the actual imminence, of danger.

More to the north still, about fifty miles from the Llano, are the ruins of San Saba and the silver mines worked by Comanches, who extract thence ornaments for themselves and for their horses, as likewise balls for their rifles. San Saba was once a Spanish mission, where the Franciscans, who instructed the savages in religion and agriculture, had a fine church built for their use; but during the war of Mexican Independence, the Comanches murdered the missionaries and burned their church, the ruins of which they conceal

with such care that there is probably no man living, except themselves, who has ever seen them.

In one of the excursions which Abbé Dubuis made to Fredericksburg before cholera broke out, he fell in with about twenty Comanch warriors of athletic build, very giants in height, who conceived it to be their duty to riddle the Abbé with arrows. He cried out to them to desist, telling them that he was a captain of the Great Spirit and Chief of Prayer. Upon this one of the Indians, who appeared to be the chief, approached him. The Abbé said to him, "Why do you desire to do me evil? Is it not true that Santa Anna is about going to San Antonio to conclude a treaty of peace with the Americans?" To which the Indian replied, "Santa Anna is too wise to do any such thing. Santa Anna will not thrust himself into the bear's jaws, to be crushed like a honeycomb; he remembers too well that the pale faces of San Antonio have forked (double) tongues. He cannot trust in their word; they are false as the shaking prairie which engulphs the unwary hunter." This, no doubt, was an allusion to a barbarous scene which occurred, I think, some time before our arrival in Texas, and which deserves to be mentioned.

The Texians believed that they could rid themselves of the Indians by the extermination of the savage chieftains. They hoped that the tribes, terror-stricken by this terrible example, would in future remain quietly within the limits of their own unexplored hunting grounds. To compass this object, they hit upon a most infamous expedient. They invited the chiefs of the neighbouring tribes to come to San Antonio, for the purpose of entering into a treaty of peace with them,

in consideration of a large sum which should be paid them in merchandise; and the Indian chiefs, trusting to the good faith of the whites, went to San Antonio without hesitation. More prudent, or probably less confiding than the others, Santa Anna remained in his camp without, at the same time communicating his suspicions to his brother chiefs. When the Indians arrived they were conducted to a large apartment, where they were shot down with one solitary exception. The survivor escaped, axe in hand, and with it cutting a passage for himself through the midst of his assassins, he took refuge in a deserted cabin, resolved on selling his life as dearly as he could. Pursued by the bullets, which whizzed about his ears, he was unable to escape; yet no one durst break in the barricaded door, behind which the Indian had sheltered himself. His assailants knew well with what rapidity the Red Skins fire their arrows, and no one wished to be the first victim. In this emergency an individual, I know not of what nation, proposed to smother him with the fumes of pepper. The proposition was hailed with acclamation, and accordingly a large quantity of blazing pepper was thrown through an opening in the roof, and soon deprived the wretched Indian of life.

Abbé Dubuis then conversed on religious topics with his interlocutor, who was no other than Santa Anna himself, whom he had already seen at Fredericksburg. But whether it was owing to the difficulty of communicating their thoughts which was felt by each, or to that reserve so natural to an Indian, the result was that Abbé Dubuis could glean no satisfactory information as to the details of their religious belief, and a meeting, which was so nearly being tragical, terminated soon

after. Santa Anna was a formidable adversary; and, without being at all corpulent, he weighed three hundred and twenty-three pounds. He was the living image of a Titan.

Abbé Dubuis was also at Fredericksburg when more than a thousand Comanches, Lipans, Wakos, and other tribes assembled there after a hunting excursion. They entered the town yelling in such a way as to strike terror into the whole population. Their head-gear was composed of the heads of animals which they had killed in the chase. They brought with them thousands of skins of buffaloes, lions, tigers, bears, deer, and panthers; and a great number of their wives accompanied them.

These women, in general, are of a wild and savage beauty; their chemise is tanned deer-skin, ornamented with a fringe of red cloth, tin, and Venetian pearls. Some of them make a kind of breast-plate with the teeth of boars and wild beasts, ranged on their breast like the brandebourgs worn by Hussars. They often take part in the hunt with their husbands, for the Comanch is a polygamist, and can espouse as many wives as he likes, on the one condition alone of giving a horse to each of them.

An American officer assured me that he had seen an Indian woman, dressed in the skin of a lion which she had killed with her own hand—a circumstance which manifested on her part no less strength than courage, for the lion of Texas, which has no mane, is a very large and formidable animal. This woman was always accompanied by a very singular animal about the size of a cat, but of the form and appearance of a goat. Its horns were rose-coloured, its fur was of the finest

quality, glossy like silk and white as snow; but instead of hoofs this little animal had claws. This officer offered five hundred francs for it; and the commandant's wife, who also spoke of this animal, offered a brilliant of great value in exchange for it; but the Indian woman refused both these offers, and kept her animal, saying that she knew a wood where they were found in abundance; and promised, that if she ever returned again, she would catch others expressly for them.

When the Indians travel with their infant children they suspend them from their saddles, with a strap of leather which passes between the legs and under the arms of the child; but the galloping of the horse shakes these poor little things dreadfully, and branches of trees and underwood tear and bruise them. It matters not, however, as it is a means of inuring them to hardships. While the child is still a suckling, the mother carries it on her back, wrapped in a blanket; and when she gives it the breast, she drags it across her shoulder, and thus the child sucks with its head down and its heels up.

In the early days of the colony, Castroville sometimes received a visit from the Lipans, who conducted themselves in a very orderly manner, no doubt from a conviction that each of the two hundred huts of the colony was provided with, at least, forty rounds of ball-cartridge. Many of them wore medals of devotion, suspended from their ears, no doubt as a badge of distinction. They were very fond of little prints, which they never ceased admiring; hence the Abbé Dubuis always kept a stock of them in his Breviary to distribute among the Indians, in case he fell in with them. At least sixty Lipans came to Castroville, one Sunday,

during high mass, and ranged themselves in front of the chapel! They seemed delighted with the sacred music, and made movements corresponding with the congregation during the celebration of divine service. A few of them wore, pendant from their ears, curiously-shaped shells of the most brilliant colours.

One of the Lipan chiefs, named Castro, was far from being a person of savage character. He had a daughter of singular beauty, who died soon after completing her eighteenth year. During her illness she was taken to the house of the founder of the colony, where she heard some airs played on the piano. Bewilderment at first seized her, and she listened with open mouth and a wild expression of eye to the melody. She then examined the wood of the instrument with her hand, viewed it above, underneath, and on all sides, then gave way to alternate fits of laughter and tears. Never did music produce such an effect; every note seemed to electrify her, and act like magic on her nerves, while it worked in her the deepest emotions.

It is beyond doubt that the Lipans had once been instructed in the truths of Christianity; for their religious belief bears its divine impress. They travel less on horseback than the Comanches. Men and women journey on foot, and half naked, in their migrations from place to place. The physical appearance of the tribe is inferior to that of the Comanches; and they are robbers rather than murderers; yet they manifest no indisposition to murder and scalp their victims from time to time.

An old German priest, an enthusiastic naturalist, who officiated in Braunfels and the neighbouring colonies at the time, although almost blind, took it into his head

to travel on foot from Braunfels to Fredericksburg for the purpose of collecting scientific curiosities along the way. He started one fine morning, his only baggage being a double pair of spectacles stuck on his nose, a tin box slung from his shoulders, and some provisions. The first day of his journey his box was filled with rare plants, and his pockets crammed with mineralogical specimens, while his hat was covered with insects fastened to it with pins. As he had killed a great many serpents of large dimensions, he knotted them together and coiled them round his body. The next day, again, he killed a rattle-snake, seven or eight feet in length, which he also wound round his body, and which served him as a belt. On he went in this most grotesque attire, never for a moment thinking of the picturesque and strange effect he must produce on the minds of those who should meet him. Never relaxing in his search for some new object to add to his variegated accoutrements, and keeping his eyes continually on the ground, he was nearly marching into the midst of a body of Comanches who were deer-hunting at the time. This walking collection of plants, insects, and reptiles, which advanced majestically towards them, so terrified them, that they fled panic-stricken from it as a supernatural apparition. The third day our friend the German had consumed all his provisions, and finding only a little fruit in the woods, was beginning to feel the cravings of hunger, when he descried columns of smoke proceeding from a clearing. He at once turned his steps in that direction. Some Red Skins had pitched their camp on the spot, but, at the sight of this strange pedestrian, they began to yell, and prepared at once for flight. The good priest, who employed the most significant signs with a view of

arresting their flight, and tranquillising them, succeeded in the end in making them understand that he was dying of hunger. The Indians, not daring to offend an unknown divinity, tremblingly placed before him coffee, maize, and some mule's flesh, which he ate with great avidity, and like a simple mortal. This meal gave him strength enough to bring him to Fredericksburg, where he arrived on the third day without accident.

It is related that a Mexican woman of the place, having entered the woods to gather wild salad, was borne off by some Red Skins. One of them cut off the skin round her head to the very bone; and it only remained, for the accomplishment of the scalping operation, to remove the skin with the hair attached, when another Indian interposed, took her as a wife, and conducted her, wounded as she was, to his tent. She resisted with all her strength the brutal lust of her new husband, and received such a whipping that her whole body was marked with bloody stripes. A few days afterwards the Indian, repulsed as usual by his victim, became furious by her resistance, armed himself with a hatchet, and dealt her two blows, one of which cut off a part of her breast, the other inflicted a deep wound on her leg. Lifeless, and stretched on a buffalo's hide, she was attended by an individual at once doctor, magician, and priest — such as is found in every tribe. This personage employed, as a remedy, magnetic passes, the juice of herbs, and superstitious ceremonies. After long and painful sufferings, the unfortunate creature recovered; and her torturer set out again for the chase. Summoning all her strength and courage, she resolved to fly; and creeping in the night time through the tents, she mounted a *mustang* which was feeding in the

prairie, and started off at full speed in a southerly direction. An instant after the Indian entered his tent, either because he had given up the chase, or that it had occupied a much shorter time than the woman had calculated upon. Finding the tent empty, and seeing that one of his horses was missing, he set about examining the tracks left in the grass and underwood. Then springing on the fleetest of his *mustangs* he darted off with the rapidity of lightning. When the day dawned he remarked that the tracks were fresh; and redoubling the ardour of pursuit, he arrived two hours afterwards in an extensive prairie, where he descried the fugitive. The woman heard his whoop as she galloped along, and looking back and perceiving the imminence of her danger, she so effectually succeeded by her voice and the application of her whip in urging on the horse to increased speed, that she maintained her distance in advance of the Indian. Thus, closely pursued, she arrived in a plain adjoining Vandenburg; but her pursuer was within two hundred yards of her. At this instant two inhabitants of Castroville entered the plain from the opposite side. They were armed; and seeing the chase, they ran in its direction. The woman galloped towards them; but as she came up to them, horse and rider rolled together on the prairie before them. The horse was dead; and the Indian, seeing the two men, disappeared in the woods; not, indeed, that he feared the unequal contest, but from an opinion which prevails among the Indians that the loss of one of their people is not compensated by the death of ten white men. And hence it is that they lie in wait during the night, and never make an attack but under the most favourable circumstances, and with vastly superior num-

bers. The Mexican woman, half dead with terror and fatigue, was carried into a hut, where she was provided with clothes, and conveyed to Castroville. After a little rest, she related to us her adventures, which were well attested by the dreadful wounds which she had received.

Castroville itself was at one time thrown into a state of consternation by a fearful tragedy. Four Alsacians had disappeared: the butcher who had hung the Swiss; a child eleven years of age who had lived with him; and two young colonists who lived with their father near us. On Christmas Eve these unfortunate people went to fetch their cattle, and to cut wood near the San Hyeronimo, but unguardedly they fell asleep under a tree, and in this state they were surprised by Indians, who pinned the two youngest victims to the earth with their arrows. The two others awoke from their sleep, and being quite unarmed, made all the resistance they could. How they fought no one can tell, but the combat must have been long and obstinate, for in one place we found the broken blade of a lance; in another, a lance with its iron twisted, and the grass trodden down in a most remarkable manner. The victims had endeavoured, no doubt, to seize the arms of their enemies, for the hands of each were cut and hacked in a shocking manner, and their bodies were riddled with arrows. The butcher had run away, but he fared even worse than the others. The dead body of his companion was found twenty yards further off. The latter evidently tried to escape by flight; but an arrow was sent right through his body, piercing the spinal marrow in its passage. We were not able to discover the tribe which had committed this frightful butchery, for the grooves of the arrows were of different forms. When the Indians go on marauding excursions,

they frequently employ this stratagem to baffle the whites in their search for the real culprits. Still we discovered that the assassins were Red Skins by the number of arrows with undulating grooves of a reddish colour, and more especially by an outrage quite unheard of up to this time in these solitudes. The child's breast was cut in the shape of a cross, and the heart was torn out. Was this evidence of cannibalism? Or was the heart destined for some superstitious ceremony, or to enter into some medicinal composition? No one could tell. The bodies were placed in coffins, and transported to Castroville, while the blood, which still ran from their wounds, oozed through the coffins, and marked the road with a long streak of red. The whole population attended the interment, and every one wept. I myself rarely felt more deeply moved than when I cast the funereal earth on those unfortunate creatures, whose lot might be that of each of us one day or other. Grief, mingled with personal apprehension, spread desolation around these individual victims of a common calamity.

The American camps were rather a source of gain to the colonists, than a protection against the Indians, who, as we have already seen, used frequently to prowl about these camps, kill a sentinel, and then take to flight, taking with them horses which they had come to steal, and generally accomplishing this with the most consummate skill, and without noise. As soon as a murder or robbery was discovered, the whole garrison turned out to give chase; but before the horses were saddled, provisions packed, and pistols loaded, the perpetrators were nowhere to be found: and even though the ponderous American cavalry might overtake them, there

were no roads; woods and deep dells were to be traversed; the Indians had separated, to divide their tracks, and thus render it a mere chance, an unexpected rencontre which could bring Indians and soldiers into mortal combat.

The Indians are, even to the present day, so numerous, from the Gulf of Mexico to New Britain, that years must elapse before civilisation and the "fire-water" will dissipate them, or even render them less redoubtable. It is only ignorance of their numbers and the extent of the territory which they occupy, that can induce a belief that the race is almost extinct. It is true that European and American emigration is incessantly narrowing these limits along the sides of the Rocky Mountains and New Mexico; but ere the mocassin of the last Red Skin ceases to tread down the grass of the prairies, thousands of colonists will be obliged to irrigate those solitudes with their sweat. Tact and strength avail but little against savages, for, in tact and strength the North American *pale faces* are mere children in comparison with the Red Skins. The territory occupied by the Indians is covered with troops of buffaloes, herds of deer, and other animals which supply them with food; and it is intersected by rivers abounding with fish, which they convert to the best use. Colonisation deprives them every day of a part of their possession, and consequently, of a part of their subsistence; but the real enemy for some is *the strong water*, for others, the small-pox, which commit incredible ravages amongst them.

The civilisation therefore of the Indians is only to be effected by the introduction among them of the Catholic religion. The experience of many years on different parts

of the American territory proves this assertion. On the frontiers, and in the neighbourhood of great colonising establishments, the attempts at introducing civilisation among the Red Skins are almost always without success. The North Americans have abused the confidence, good faith, and helplessness of the Indians; they have ill-used and massacred them without pity on different occasions, and the Indians ever seek revenge for these things. In the war of Florida, General Taylor employed blood-hounds to tear and devour his enemies. The *forked* tongue of the "pale faces" is a term which characterises the bad faith of the Yankees in their intercourse with the Indians. Nearly all the agents who carry on the fur trade directly with the Indians for the great Fur Companies, are French, Canadians, or Creoles. In the fastness of the wilderness, among the tribes who have had little or no intercourse with the Americans, the introduction of civilisation is more easy; religion makes rapid progress; the natives of the soil become fervent Christians; and although they continue intrepid hunters, they lose all ferocity of character, and devote themselves to agricultural pursuits.

In Texas we have not attempted the conversion of the Red Skins, because, according to the counsel of St. Paul, "Well-ordered charity begins at home." Now, before devoting ourselves to the instruction of the Indians, our whole care and all our time should be given to the whites; and we were too few to occupy ourselves with two things at the same time. God is, without doubt, the master of hearts; yet it is probable that the priest who would go among the Comanches to convert them, would be scalped in the outset. It is not always that people have been so fortunate as to

escape their arrows so happily as we have, thanks to God.

Castroville was unquestionably a place of commotions; even without the aid of Indians, dramas were not rare. One morning, the wife of a colonist went to gather wild salad in a neighbouring valley, where I was in the habit of going every day on the same errand. The woman never returned; and her husband, who was obliged to keep his bed with a broken leg, and consequently unable to go to look for her, sent his children and neighbours in search. After an unsuccessful search of twenty-four hours, they found the unfortunate woman lying under a tree quite dead. Her head had been beaten to atoms and her whole body was covered with blood. A stone which was stained with blood, and to which adhered a portion of her hair, seemed to be the instrument of murder. Near the body was the bent blade of a knife which the victim used for cutting the salad. We were never able to discover either the cause of this murder or the murderer. This tragical event spread consternation among the inhabitants, but they were soon diverted from their grief by other events no less striking. At Castroville, individual misfortunes were ever invested with a public character, and all the colony sympathised cordially in the grief of those whom these murders affected more or less directly. Men and women on these occasions put on their best suits of black, and the young girls attired themselves in white. No one absented himself from the funeral; their prayers were interrupted by their tears; and, into the open grave, each threw a handful of earth as a last adieu.

One evening I was requested by an American to bless

his union with a Mexican woman who resided in the neighbourhood of Castroville. I mounted my horse, and two hours afterwards I arrived in the middle of a wood near the Medina, at a *rancho* with which I was unacquainted. It was night, and the cabin was thronged with Americans who were preparing to have a dance. The husband could not speak a word of Spanish, nor his wife a word of English; how then had they understood each other, and decided upon the marriage? The Americans approached me, either one by one or in groups, to interrogate me on religion in general or on Catholicism in particular.

All travellers have remarked a habit among the Americans of commencing some religious subject, and of entering into controversy with a minister, no matter of what denomination, and this in every place, and on every occasion, in public, on board a steamer, and often with the first comer, be he countryman or stranger, known to them or otherwise. Is this a monomania? or a desire *to show off*, or rather with a view of increasing their knowledge? I am strongly inclined to believe that there is something of all these in it. Besides, they discuss questions of which they are totally ignorant, but in such a way as never to appear beaten, jumping from one question to another whenever they are hard pressed, and abandoning their half-finished arguments as soon as they find it troublesome to maintain them. An American wished to convince me that the Bible had been fabricated by priests at the fall of the Roman empire. This gentleman was not a formidable antagonist, but he was very serious. It is useless to think of convincing them by logic; no matter what amount of it you bring to bear upon them, the only thing you can

obtain from them is an avowal that, "This man plies his trade very ably." The prejudice which exists against the Catholic religion is really inexplicable in a people who vaunt themselves the freest and the most civilised in the world. In the forests to the west of the United States are found a number of families of the Methodist and Presbyterian persuasions, who really believe that the Catholic priest is an infernal being with veritable horns on his head. One day the Bishop of Bufalo was obliged to take off his hat at dinner on board a steamer, to prove that he had none. On one occasion, on board a steamer which was ascending the Mississippi, a Presbyterian lady declaimed fiercely against Catholicism, venting her rage against its ministers, and all this in a loud voice, so that she was heard by a Catholic missionary lately arrived from Europe, and who was sitting at the same table with her. The missionary had but a very imperfect knowledge of the English language, and being quite unable to keep pace with a very tangled discussion, ventured to give an argument *ad hominem* to the Presbyterian lady.

"Madam," said he, "are you thoroughly acquainted with Catholicism and its priests, since you do not fear thus to vilify them?"

"Certainly not, sir,—and God forbid that I should ever know anything about this cursed religion of the papists."

"Well then, that being the case, allow me to say that you must be a person of a malicious character."

At these words, the old lady started up, flushed with rage and shame, and thus addressed her interlocutor:—

"Sir, you are supremely insolent to insult thus a lady with whom you are totally unacquainted."

"Madam, I have not the most remote idea of insulting you; I have only applied to you the argument which you have hurled against Catholicism and its ministers. Were I acquainted with you, I should not in all probability have said the slightest evil of you, for you may be the most virtuous woman in the world; you are wrong in decrying a religion with which you are unacquainted, and which may be the best in the world after all."

Nine-tenths of the children in the United States go to school as soon as they can walk, and are considered as men from that time forth; and a most ridiculous deference and respect is paid to these citizens in short frocks. They are not commanded to do this or that, they are respectfully requested to do it. The common formula on such occasions, is the following:

"My dear sir, will you have the kindness to do this, or to go there?" If to the prayer be added a sweet cake, the young gentleman obeys with an air of importance, which makes his friend smile. As soon as the young fellow is able to read, write, and cipher, he is placed, no matter where, provided the place be a lucrative one. His father, as a last adieu and counsel, says to him, "My child, make money; honestly if you can, but at all events make money." The child becomes a man; his life is spent in travelling here and there, and in continual traffic; he chews, smokes, and drinks on board the steamer incessantly; he reads the advertisements in the papers, the electioneering manifestos, and the names of the candidates. Such is American education. And hence, to convert them, it is useless to appeal to the mind, or to depend upon logical reasonings. You must speak to the heart, and thus, real, efficacious, and sometimes

easy conquests are obtained. The Bishop of Bufalo, who, by his experience, learning, and piety, is one of the most distinguished of the American bishops, said to me on one occasion, "Remember, for your own direction, that I never yet effected the conversion of any one by controversy." It is the heart which speaks to the heart. Simple, unsophisticated instruction, language shorn of all ornament, but breathing profound conviction and ardent charity, is what moves and draws to you the American, by their effect and influence upon his soul. Brilliant eloquence, sublime discourses, strike his imagination to be sure, but that is all. They think only of money, they hear nothing save the sound of gold; and yet, when a voice speaks to their heart, and when the sweet names of country, family, charity, and the love of God are made to vibrate within them, a new chord, a music hitherto wholly unknown, full of harmony, calm, and happiness, astonishes, enchants, and leads them to the foot of our altars. They begin to feel an intellectual joy; they discover that there is something more beautiful and sweet than commerce and riches; they find out that they have a heart and a soul, and that this heart and this soul have their duties and their aspirations; it is a spring which has been impeded in its action, but not dried up, and which gushes forth as soon as a pious hand removes the stones which a life of worldly turmoil has heaped upon it.

The greater part of the Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and other ministers of Texas, and the west of the United States, are as ignorant as their disciples. They embrace this state of life as one would enter on the grocery business, without any formality whatever. Some of them have but a very limited knowledge of

their duties and of the Bible, which is their only guide.

A friend of mine, a missionary priest, administered extreme unction to a dying man in the presence of a Methodist minister, who was either a relative or friend of the sick person. After the ceremony, the minister approached the priest, and inquired of him why he had anointed with oil certain parts of the body of the dying man. The priest replied that it was a precept of the church, founded on the 14th and 15th verses of the 5th chapter of St. James, who says, "Is any man sick among you? let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick: and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." The minister confessed that he had never read that passage, and promised that he would avail himself of it at the first opportunity. And the fact is, that ever afterwards he imitated the Catholic unction of the dying; but as oil was very dear, he usually employed melted grease, and with this he rubbed the sick person from head to foot. The Episcopalians and Quakers are better informed, and consequently more tolerant, and less violent against the Catholics.

Of all the Methodist eccentricities which I witnessed, the most curious unquestionably was, *a camp meeting*. This ludicrous custom leads to very great excesses. The sectaries assemble in a plain or in a wood, and generally remain there for three days. Here they form an encampment, and subsist on the provisions which they have brought with them from home. Their time is spent in listening to the sermons of their ministers,

in singing psalms, and reciting prayers. Women of a certain age get into melting moods, weep, and utter cries of anguish and repentance at the sight of their sins; sometimes they imagine that the Holy Ghost descends upon them; then, in their own words, they are *happy*, and impelled by a desire of making their brethren sharers in their happiness, they mount the platform, and preach in their turn. Their words are intermingled with sobs and cries, and the assembly, already disposed to excitement by fasting and watching, thereby receive most profound impressions. Among the rigid Methodists, who are styled *saints*, it is not unusual to see young girls preach, and with an air of inspiration and an extraordinary volubility of utterance, deliver the most impassioned discourses, until at length they fall into paroxysms of nervous excitement, and into the most frightful convulsions. Among these fanatical apostles and penitents of the desert are to be found many young men, who go to the assemblies for the sake of amusement, and also young females, who follow their parents there much against their will. Amidst the ceremonies, and during the night, certain *liaisons* are formed, in which morality suffers.

It sometimes happens that comic scenes slightly modify the gravity of these meetings. One day, a preacher in petticoats, of a very attractive appearance, caught the attention of an Irishman, who had been drawn thither by mere curiosity. He interrupted the fair preacher by asking her whether she was married. In an instant her cheeks were suffused with blushes, and she made no answer. The question, however, being repeated, she replied angrily, but with an inspired air: "Yes, I am married to our Lord Jesus Christ." The

Irishman retired, with an air of vexation, saying: "I am greatly afraid, Madam, that you'll never be admitted into the house of your father-in-law, for you have been married without his consent." The whole assembly broke out into a roar of laughter.

Still, in such an assembly it is not prudent to interrupt the preachers by absurd or ridiculous questions. By so doing you expose yourself to the risk of being torn to pieces; and hence these interruptions are very rare. The American press attempted to brand these disorders with infamy, and to hold up *the Camp Meetings* to public ridicule. But it would be a difficult task to convince these enthusiasts that their assemblies are more destructive of public morality than useful to religion.

CHAP. VI.

A PROJECT. — A JOURNEY IN THE PRAIRIES. — A NIGHT IN THE TROPICS. — CHIT-CHAT IN THE WOODS. — LAVACA. — THE FATE OF A COAT. — A JEW IN REALITY BUT NOT SO IN APPEARANCE. — COLLECTE. — NATCHEZ. — CREVASSES. — A RACE ALONG THE RIVER JAUNE. — RETURN TO TEXAS. — A MELANCHOLY DEATH. — THE FUTURE OF A MISSIONARY. — A PROSY VOYAGE. — A DINNER NOT EASY TO EAT. — A TERRIBLE NIGHT. — A TÊTE-À-TÊTE WITH PANTHERS. — ARRIVAL AT SAN ANTONIO.

THE Abbé Dubuis and myself conceived a vast and hazardous project, the realisation of which would have been beyond our strength and the means at our disposal, had we had less confidence in God and ourselves. The reader is already aware that our chapel was too small, and so wretched in every respect, that it neither protected us against rain, sun, nor serpents. Often, too, wild beasts took refuge there from the raging storm. The Abbé and myself conceived the idea of building a church; and I made out a plan and drawings, with minute and complete calculations. The realisation of this project, difficult as it was on account of our want of money, was nevertheless a thing of real necessity for the colony, and likely to add very much to its importance. We stated our intentions to the colonists, and thereby awakened their ambition; but then they were unable to afford us much assistance save that of their brawny arms, and the offering of some building materials. The wealthiest among them promised us a little pecu-

niary aid. All expenses computed, we found that the workmanship alone would amount to something about one hundred and sixty pounds sterling. This sum I took upon myself to collect, were I even to traverse the whole extent of the United States for the object.

I recollected some Creole families of Louisiana, and some other acquaintances of mine in that state. I calculated on creating a great sensation by my racy and authentic accounts of a country of which so many improbable stories had gone abroad, and I hoped to convert all this into money. My friend Charles, who purposed establishing a warehouse at Castroville, had some idea of going to New Orleans to make purchases. His society would be most agreeable, and would serve to lessen very materially the rigours of that life which I should necessarily lead in this pious expedition.

We should travel on horseback without compass or guide, across vast, uninhabited prairies, with the very probable risk of losing our way. Many colonists travelling through the prairies, either in pursuance of their callings, or in search of their cattle, fail in finding the way back, and, exhausted with hunger and thirst, sit down at the foot of a tree, where death puts an end to their sufferings. Besides this, there was the danger of being scalped by the Indians; and we could not reckon upon game for subsistence, so that we should be obliged to carry large supplies of provisions with us; and as we could not hope to discover water every day, I provided myself with a piece of citric salt, with which to rub my tongue whenever thirst became insupportable. I was now about to *enjoy* the more or less poetic adventures of a nomade life —a life under tents; and I must confess that from the

little previous experience I had had of such a life, the prospect before me was in no wise cheering.

Of the two horses which we took with us, one was lent and the other was sold us for twenty-two piastres. My horse was a fiery animal, and formerly the property of a Comanche, as was evident from his ears being cut in the shape of a V. So, one evening we bade adieu to the Abbé Dubuis, and set out on our journey, Charles gay as usual, while my whole attention was engrossed by the caprices of my indocile steed. We bivouacked in a chapral of the Leona; the horses were unsaddled and tied to mesquites, around which there was rich pasturage, and their saddles served us as pillows. Having selected a spot at some distance from the trees where we should be less exposed to the attacks of tarantulas and scorpions, enveloped in blankets, we stretched ourselves on the grass.

It was a lovely night; and the beauteous tropical sky shed around us from its millions of stars a pale sweet light, while not a cloud appeared on the dark pure blue of that immense gold-spangled dome. A gentle breeze, bearing with it a cooling freshness, played through the foliage of the trees, and lulled us to repose by its whisperings. I had read, in a modern poet, that it was a pleasant thing to sleep in the bosom of a tropical night in a warm, perfumed atmosphere, with the green sward for one's bed, and the starry firmament for its canopy, plunged in the inebriating influence of glorious nature, and the enervating enchantment of dreams. It cannot be denied that the air was mild, the night lovely, the heavens covered with myriads of twinkling stars; but it must be confessed that the green sward was frightfully hard. Small flint pebbles

abounded, and the grass which covered them was not thick enough to prevent us from feeling their sharp points. In whatever position I settled myself, it was equally painful. Much against my will I lay quite awake, and nowise disposed to dream; yet the insects were even more awake than I was, and me they selected as the theatre of their nocturnal gambollings. On all sides they discovered passages through which they made their way under my garments, and rejoiced at having succeeded in effecting their purpose, they stung me horribly; they came and they went, and they halted to sting me again. Larger animals prowled around us, and all night our ears were entertained with the barking of coyotes (foxes) and the caterwaulings of panthers and tiger-cats. I was aware that these animals never attack man unless driven to it by hunger, and, generally speaking, they are shy and timid; nevertheless they are extremely capricious. Notwithstanding this apparent timidity, the sound of their voice was anything but agreeable music to me. It was in vain that I recalled to mind the proofs and examples of the harmlessness of their nature; these proofs, convincing as they were, did not quite tranquillise me, nor did they prevent my heart from beating much more quickly than usual. In short, that nothing might be wanting, the night dews chilled me, and as we had not lighted a fire, for fear of the Indians, the damp penetrated me, and I was seized with incessant shivering. Now, all this was prosaic with a vengeance; and I fancied that the poet who had given us such a lively picture of the sweetness of such a night, must have thought upon it sitting in his comfortable arm-chair, or sleeping in his snug bed. Notwithstanding all these discomforts, how-

ever, Charles slept; nay, he slept soundly and with the noise of a high-pressure engine.

We rose with the dawn; but this time certainly there was no great merit in our early rising. We set off in the direction of Lavaca, on the Gulf of Mexico, whence a steamer was to convey us to Galveston. We forded the San Antonio, behind the mission of San José, and then traversed a thick chapral which led us to a wood of mesquites of enormous size. It was only ten o'clock in the forenoon, and still so oppressive was the heat, that we were obliged to make a halt. The horses were unsaddled, the blankets spread under a large tree, and while I read my breviary, Charles lighted a fire to while away the time. Although in no wise necessary, a good fire is so gladdening to the heart of the traveller in these solitudes, that he need offer no apology for affording himself this innocent pleasure. We partook of a repast which might be considered breakfast or dinner; it was however a frugal meal, for the heat obliges even those who might otherwise be inclined to indulge a little, to practise temperance. The repast over, we lighted our pipes, and, as the smoke ascended in light clouds, we talked of bygone days, which were to us but as the *tableaux* of a pleasant dream, in which, as in a dreary background, appeared our homestead; the old church, where, as children, we used to say our prayers; the centenarian lime-trees, which witnessed our gambols; the beloved mother, who rocked us to sleep as she hummed her song of love; the playmates of our childhood,—that golden age, when all is happiness,—sweet reminiscences, yet cruel, as their reflection flung a crowd of sorrow over the present. Of the future we spoke but little,—sufficient unto the day is the evil

thereof, and then the breaking down of health, and the total exhaustion of my strength contracted my horizon in a very melancholy way; to me it appeared overshadowed with dark and angry clouds. I closed my eyes that I might not look before me, and spoke only of the passing moment, of that journey which was far from being agreeable, but which promised variety, and a few of those unforeseen events which occupy the mind, and prevent it from thinking. When God, to try a missionary, abandons him to his own weakness, distraction is happiness.

Many good Christians in France imagine that God continually showers down upon us torrents of fortifying grace, which renders us superhuman, so to speak, and quite insensible to the sufferings of earth; they fancy that at each prayer which either our moral or physical sufferings carry before His throne, He sends down an angel to dry up our secret tears, and to fill us with joy and strength. Alas! the missionary is as weak as his fellow men; like them he suffers, and if God consoles him, it is not by virtue of a special favour, but in consequence of that infinite goodness which He vouchsafes to all the humble of heart who throw themselves at His feet. For us, as for all other Christians, heaven is not a gift, but a recompense: to obtain it, we must labour and suffer. If happiness and joy were the missionary's companions in his apostleship, where would be his merit? If our souls were mere novices in the life of trials, if we ourselves were not drenched in bitterness, how could we sympathise in the sufferings of others? How could we love and console the wretched, if our hearts were callous and strangers to sentiments of affection? Each one makes a priest to his own taste, and criticises him

who is not modelled after his ideal . . . . . Poor humanity !

About four o'clock in the afternoon, we pursued our journey. Reaching the neighbourhood of a Mexican *rancho*, we were very thirsty, and asked for some milk. There was milk in the house, but the farmer's wife had already mixed it with bran to give it to the pigs. Such was our thirst, however, that we swallowed some mouthfuls of the swine's portion. The Cibolo runs near this *rancho*, but its bed is generally dry in this district. The water runs underground only to reappear a little farther off.

In the evening we encamped in a prairie, thinly planted with mesquites. To prevent the insects from annoying me as they did the night before, I wrapped my head and ears carefully in a kerchief, rolled myself in my blanket, and hearing no noise I slept pretty soundly. On the second day after this, we were completely knocked up—the trotting of the horses had broken us down, and still we wished to force our march with a view of reaching a distant farm where we might pass the night. From this farm we were separated by a long prairie without any shade; the sun fell perpendicularly upon our heads; and the skin of my face was quite burned, and fell off in large flakes. Towards evening our horses were knocked up with fatigue. Mine had completely lost his starting ardour, and dragged his tottering legs after him with difficulty. We dismounted to ease our steeds and to hold them up.

We had proceeded on our journey about an hour when I heard Charles suddenly utter a cry of terror. He was a few paces in advance, perfectly motionless, and, as it were, fascinated by an enormous rattlesnake, which

was rearing and writhing within a few feet of the place where he stood. More accustomed than my friend to encounters of this kind, I advanced towards the monster, cracking my whip as I approached; and it glided into the prairie to the right of our route.

I suffered dreadfully from thirst; but having nothing wherewith to slake it, I stretched myself on the ground, and began to suck in the dew-drops which lay on the leaves but scantily enough. Again I mounted my horse, with my throat and chest all on fire,—and as my friend Charles had quite recovered from the fright which his encounter with the serpent had occasioned, we summoned up all our good humour to shorten the road, and at length, about midnight, we reached the farm. A good meal, a roof to shelter us, and a bed, three excellent things which we were rejoiced to meet with, did us all imaginable good.

The next day's journey brought us into a more civilised country. The first town on our route was Goliad, an insignificant place, built by the Americans in the vicinity of an old Mexican fortification called *La Bahia*. La Bahia, which lay along a chain of pleasant hills, had been thickly peopled; during the War of Independence, however, it was made one vast heap of ruins by the Texians. The country is very fertile; and maize is every where cultivated, while magnificent tracts of rich pasturage support large herds of fine oxen, horses, and sheep. We next crossed the Coleto, which runs through an extensive prairie, and like all the rivers of Texas, is bordered on each side by trees of great height and strength, which grow so closely to each other, and are, besides, so interlaced with the wild vine, ferns, and underwood, that in some places it is quite impossible

for either man or beast to force a passage through them.

In the evening we arrived at Victoria, which promises soon to be a flourishing town, owing to its favourable position on the Colorado, which is navigable nearly all the way from this place to the sea. We remained one night with the priest of Victoria, Father Fitzgerald, an athletic young Irishman, of considerable abilities. I had made the good Father's acquaintance some time before, at Galveston. As it was only thirty-two miles from Victoria to Lavaca, and as there was no pasturage in the neighbourhood of this place, we left our horses at Victoria, intending to call for them on our return. Accordingly, we hired a small vehicle from a Frenchman, and set out the same evening.

On my way to Lavaca I was struck with the singular undulations of the plain — a very sea of sand. The undulations of the land, long, smooth, and uniform, resemble (so as almost to deceive one,) the ebb and flow of the tide. I should be strongly disposed to think that the Gulf of Mexico, in times of old, had extended to this point, and that its waves had been transformed into sand at the stroke of a magician's wand, had I not observed the same phenomenon in the plain of the Leona, one hundred and fifty leagues from the sea at Lavaca. There was but one hotel, and a few wooden houses built along the beach. It is the place of debarkation for the German families who found our colonies. Here they are thrown ashore without shelter, provisions, or means of transport; and, as a natural consequence, numbers of them die of hunger, or perish by the severity of the climate. The aspect of these few huts scattered here and there is dreary beyond expression.

The steamer had not arrived, so we could not proceed on our journey. Our only amusement in the meantime was line-fishing, but we could not indulge even in this agreeable pastime during the scorching heat of the day. Walking, too, was out of the question, owing to the want of every kind of shade and protection from the sun. We resolved, therefore, to sleep during the day, and be up and stirring during the night; but thousands of mosquitoes, which we never dreamed of, forced us to change our plan. One night that I could not sleep, I went to take a swim in the bay; but I had scarcely entered the water when lo! by the moonlight I saw an enormous shark approach me. Only imagine how quickly I scampered out of the water! Sharks are both very numerous and very voracious in the Gulf of Mexico; and thousands of stories are told of tragic events having occurred along its shores; hence I really feared that I, in my turn, should become the hero of some legend.

At length we put to sea, and in twenty-four hours arrived at Galveston; but the good bishop was absent. My black cotton coat was four years old, and from the effects of sun and rain it was now all the colours of the rainbow,—old age and long service had worn it to rags. My trousers were quite as bad as my coat; as for my hat, it had neither shape nor colour. It was quite clear that I could not proceed to New Orleans in this plight. Having therefore borrowed a coat from one of the bishop's people, I brought it to the convent of the Ursuline ladies to be mended. The good sisters, having considered the matter attentively, concluded that the best thing to be done was to put in new sleeves, black ones, of course, but lo! when the job was completed the contrast between the old material and the new was so

ludicrously striking, that it was preposterous to attempt to wear the coat in a civilised country. Misfortune, however, sometimes brings good in its train; and so it turned out with me. My friends of the bishop's house made a collection among themselves, from the produce of which they purchased me a coat — a luxury which I was not at all accustomed to.

We set sail again, and two days afterwards arrived at New Orleans. The great city of the south was at that time visited with a triple scourge — cholera, yellow fever, and inundation. The Mississippi had broken down its banks above the suburb of La Fayette, and its waters rushed into the streets. Almost everywhere through the city people communicated with each other in boats — a circumstance which augmented the labour attendant on my difficult task of collecting money. To make matters worse, the citizens had already been solicited for charities on many occasions a short time before my arrival, and, besides, business was extremely dull.

The pious and noble-hearted archbishop, when granting me permission to make a collection, said to me: "If you succeed in collecting twenty-five piastres, you could do no better than employ them to defray the expenses of your journey back to Texas." But I had not made so long a journey to be so quickly discouraged, and putting all my confidence in God, I began the collection. The first day, an Irish Catholic gave me twenty piastres; and the following days the subscription amounted to about ten piastres daily. A certain tailor, a Jew, of whom I had bespoken a pair of trowsers, chatted with me about my mission while taking my measure. After half-an-hour's conversation, the good man made

me a present of an entire suit of clothes, handing me at the same time five piastres for my future church —an act of generosity which excited a deep feeling of gratitude in my heart. Still the collection went on but slowly, and I was frequently employed in ministering to the spiritual wants of the cholera patients. I resolved, therefore, to leave New Orleans as soon as possible.

My first visit was to the little villages along the Mississippi, as I depended more upon the rich planters for subscriptions than upon the merchants of the city. At Donaldsonville, on the right bank of the river, and twenty-four miles from New Orleans, the parish priest collected a small sum in a few days, his own offering being a few sacred vestments. From Donaldsonville I rode along the banks of the River Fourche, as far as Thibaudeauville, about thirty miles farther on.

Sugar plantations and fields of maize border the route in uninterrupted succession, and every now and again you see noble mansions, some painted white, others green, all ornamented and covered with creeping plants, tropical flowers, rose trees in full blow, and altheas. In the background is seen that endless extent of forests which everywhere stretch along the river banks. On my way I came upon a *crevasse*,—one of those openings which the Mississippi and its tributaries effect in their embankments, and through which their waters rush, and devastate the plain. Thousands of negroes were at work up to the waist in mud, striving to stop up the *crevasse* with fascines, branches of trees, and a kind of hemp, made of a parasite plant called *barbe d'Espagnol*, which hangs pendant from the trees in long tendrils. This plant destroys the trees to which it clings

by absorbing all their sap. When dried, the natives use it for stuffing mattresses.

Thibaudeauville is rather a garden than a town, so embedded and concealed is it by catalpas, magnolias, plane-trees, and pines. The parish priest, a young Frenchman, was constructing a large handsome church at the time. More favoured than ourselves, he had almost completed his work, while we were in complete uncertainty as to whether we should ever be able to begin ours. Although all his money was sunk in this grand undertaking, yet he made me some valuable presents. A Jewess of rank, who had just purchased a ball-dress, being made acquainted with the poverty of our mission, presented it to us as her offering to our contemplated church. I subsequently converted this dress into two beautiful white chasubles. Of a certainty, the Jews are less Jews than we generally believe. Noble example for Catholics, to see this Jewish lady foregoing all the pleasures of the ball to aid a Catholic priest in his work of charity!

I next visited Natchez, a small town built on an elevated plateau, at whose feet the Mississippi rolls on in all its majestic windings and sinuosities; and in the distance, as far as the eye can reach, stretch out the endless monotonous forests of Louisiana. The houses of Natchez are constructed of brick, and have a melancholy air; the streets are wide and at right angles to each other, and all are bordered with shady trees. The most striking object is the church, which, although recently constructed, has already met with various mishaps. On the strength of subscriptions guaranteed by the wealthy townspeople who viewed in the future edifice an embellishment for the town, the church rose rapidly; un-

fortunately, however, the subscribers only paid part of their subscriptions, and in the end it was found necessary to sell it by auction to liquidate the debt. Fortunately, Father Raho, the Vicar-General, during a tour he made through Louisiana and Mexico, collected as much money as repurchased the church, and it was accordingly restored to divine worship. This example was well calculated to encourage me. The Bishop of Natchez was still at Rome, where he was assassinated in 1848 or 1849; but the Vicar-General received me with open arms, for I had known him when he was Rector of the College of St. Louis. Like Abbé Dubuis, he had a heart of gold in a body of steel. I was very much attached to him, and he in turn cherished the kindliest recollection of me. I visited some Catholic families, from whom I received alms.

In one of my excursions in the neighbourhood, I fell in with a miserable remnant of the once famous tribe of the Natchez. You cannot imagine anything more wretched or less interesting than their appearance — not a trace of their past glory remains, if indeed they were glorious for aught but being sung by Châteaubriand.

At my departure, the good Father Raho, although very straitened in circumstances himself, borrowed money to buy me some shirts and shoes, for I was reduced to the direst want of these articles.

I got on board a steamer to descend the river as far as Bâton Rouge; but our boat foundered just as we were starting, and I escaped by jumping to the bank. Fortunately no one was drowned, and our only inconvenience was in being obliged to await the arrival of another boat. It is at Bâton Rouge that the legislature of Louisiana

holds its sessions, in an immense Gotho-American building, constructed of iron, marble, and granite. Here too is one of those Penitentiaries of which the Countess Merlin speaks in her *Letters on Havannah.* The parish priest, a Frenchman,—very learned in natural history and having a splendid collection of plants and animals, received me very cordially. His learning proved most useful to the people on many occasions. During my stay a conflagration broke out in the open plain, and extended over a large surface. This was looked upon as the forerunner of a volcanic eruption, and immediate recourse was had to the curé to ask his advice and counsel. He desired them to bring him a portion of the inflammable earth, and recognised at once the presence of phosphorus and ammonia in great quantities. The phenomenon was attributed by him to the vicinity of a cemetery and a privy, and thus the town was tranquillised. I preached one Sunday to a small audience on my mission, and although the planters had not as yet received the proceeds of their harvest, the offerings amounted to three or four hundred francs. The curé himself contributed some handsome ornaments for the altar; and at my departure I invoked the benediction of Heaven upon this charitable town.

I crossed the Mississippi to go to West-Bâton Rouge, and on my way I came upon another very broad *crevasse.* These crevasses form in many instances deep and dangerous marshes. Will it be believed, that the crevasse of which I am now speaking was attributed to crabs? No doubt, crabs are in myriads in this spot; still, the more I compare the cause with the effect, the more I am at a loss to explain the mystery. Here is the explanation given me by a young Creole, who was

with me at the time : the crabs make tubular holes in the earth, which, when prolonged, pierce the embankment. Through the hole thus formed, a small quantity of water issues, which the pressure of the river increases at every instant. Should two of the holes be in juxtaposition, the water by degrees wears away the earth between them, and in a short time throws them both into one; and the volume of water being thus increased, enlarges its narrow channel, rushes into other crab holes until at length the bank is completely destroyed, and out rushes a river which inundates the plain. During the day negroes are employed in destroying the nests of crabs, and hence these occurrences happen ordinarily during the night. But the crevasse in question was so broad and deep, that they were obliged to wait for the waters of the river to diminish before they could repair it. We could not cross it on horseback, so we took a boat, and I went to the house of my young Creole, where the family received me with great politeness and cordiality, and subsequently, by their offerings, increased the sum which I had already collected.

The sum total of the collection amounted to 200 piastres, and I had no reason whatever to complain of the success of my enterprise; but now a variety of circumstances prevented me from pursuing it. The parish priest of Donaldsonville, when I arrived on the 4th of July, (the anniversary of the United States' Independence,) had been invited by his parishioners to deliver a discourse, befitting that solemn occasion. As this was a high compliment conferred on him, he accepted it with due acknowledgments, and was therefore bound to fulfil the engagement; but at the very moment he was

repairing to the meeting, he was summoned in all haste to administer the last Sacraments to the cholera patients, who were in a dying state at the Yellow River. Now, his discourse would occupy two hours at least, and hence the impossibility of going that day to the Yellow River, a distance of thirty-five miles; for it was near five o'clock in the evening: still the poor people could not be abandoned, accordingly, the parish priest asked me to go in his place, a request I could not think of refusing. It was the rainy season, and as the roads, with which I was totally unacquainted, were converted into quagmires, the curé lent me his favourite horse, Zephyr, an animal fleet as the wind, and ready to clear any inclosure-wall when the gate was shut. My guide was a negro, and my companion an artilleryman of the national guard.

About five o'clock in the evening we crossed the Mississippi in a boat which landed us on a kind of bank, from which the water had receded very recently. Being first on land, I was waiting until my companions had all left the boat, and until the boatman had received his fare, when the artilleryman cried out to me, "Into your saddle in an instant, and ply your spurs, or you are a lost man." Without paying any attention to the matter, I perceived that the horse and myself were sinking fast in the moving sand, and were already embedded in it up to the knees. After a long struggle I succeeded at last in liberating myself and mounting Zephyr, who, after a few powerful plunges, saved me and himself from all danger.

The rain fell in torrents, and my military friend, with a view, no doubt, of saving his uniform, took refuge in a neighbouring house, whilst the negro and

myself pursued our journey along a muddy road, bounded on the left by the earthen wall which indicated the course of the Mississippi, but concealed its waters from our view, and having dreary plantations and uncultivated fields in uninterrupted succession on the right. Night was approaching, and my guide advised me to quicken my pace, for we had still two crevasses before us. "More crevasses!" cried I, sorely annoyed at the announcement. I neither minded fatigue nor dangers, but for crevasses I had a deep aversion, and I resolved never to live in Louisiana, afflicted as it was by this scourge, which fertilises the country every year, but which involves several planters in utter ruin. Aided by bright moonlight we crossed the crevasses; in some places the horses sank in the mud up to the saddle-girths; in others, they were obliged to swim and breast a strong current.

Having overcome all these obstacles, we turned to the right, into the interior of the country, and now struck upon a better road across a thick forest. Though I was wet to the skin, and covered with mud, yet I listened with delight to the voice of the tempest, which was raging around us. The howling of the wind through the leaves, the crashing of trees, the noise of the branches, as they were dashing against each other, the terrific thunder-claps which followed in rapid succession — the outbursts of Nature's wrath — in short, to all this I hearkened with delight. Huge clouds rushed over the moon; at intervals she would show herself and fling before our affrighted horses the shadows of the mighty trees which skirted the way. Still we galloped on.

Having crossed an immense marsh formed by the

late rains, we knocked at a cabin-door, having reached our destination. An old woman, who opened the door, offered me a cup of coffee to warm me; but it was after midnight, and although half dead from fatigue and hunger, I was obliged to remain fasting as I had to celebrate the Holy Mysteries in the morning. My clothes and shoes were covered with a thick coating of mud, as were also my hands and face. In this plight I could not present myself before any company, and what remained of the night would have afforded me barely sufficient time to make some change in my person and dress. Still I could hardly keep my eyes open, so sleepy was I; and, in truth, I had need of sleep to forget my hunger. But how was I to meet all these necessities? The following plan struck me as best, and I adopted it. I procured a barrel full of water, into which I plunged myself, clothes and all; and, armed with a brush I scrubbed myself from head to foot for half-an-hour; then I took off my clothes, hung them before the fire, and went to bed. Next morning I rose early to prepare the sick for the reception of the Sacraments, which could not be administered until after Mass. I put on my clothes, which were far from being dry; and the damp cold of them made me shiver all over. Still I could delay no longer, as I was actually fainting from inanition. After Mass I baptised a great number of young negroes. At length, about mid-day, I was enabled to take some refreshment; but I was so weak that I had neither the strength nor the desire to eat; I merely swallowed a cup of coffee, and returned to Donaldsonville, without having seen any trace of the Yellow River, and without having ascertained who it was that gave that name to a few wretched cabins.

Next day I returned to New Orleans, bringing with me several boxes of linen and church ornaments; but I began to be afflicted with rheumatic pains, which stiffened my limbs, and tortured me at every movement. Oh how full of thorns are the roses of the Mission! Two letters awaited me at New Orleans—one from a young countryman of mine, the Abbé Chanrion, whom a broken constitution obliged to retire from the labours of the Mission. He announced to me his approaching end, and begged the assistance of my prayers. The poor fellow died a month afterwards, at New Orleans, after a lingering illness, and after having maintained here below, as long as he could, and in the midst of sufferings, the breath of worthless life. The other letter was from Abbé Dubuis, who pressed me to return as quickly as possible to Castroville, where the cholera having broken out with increased intensity, overwhelmed him with labour. He himself had just recovered from another attack, thanks to our famous specific. I at once suspended the work of begging, and made my preparations for the journey without losing a moment, to fly to the succour of my beloved *confrère*. Having packed vases of flowers, linen, church ornaments, and presents of all sorts, I embarked for Galveston, where Charles joined me.

We landed at Indian Point, a small town built on a tongue of sand, in the bay of Matagorda. Three-fourths of its inhabitants are German. We expected to find a new conveyance to Castroville more easily than at Lavaca. A bargain was no sooner concluded with a German than I wrote to Father Fitzgerald, of Victoria, to say that we should soon be with him, and to pray him to have our horses in readiness. We soon started again on our journey, in a vehicle drawn by two strong mules.

As we passed through the plain of Lavaca, under a broiling sun (it was the beginning of August), we perceived a small tilbury dashing towards us at a furious rate. The driver, a negro, pulled up as soon as we met, and asked me was I Father Domenech?

"Yes," I replied.

"Then," said he, "drive on as fast as you can, for Father Fitzgerald is dying at Victoria."

"Dying!" said I. "Why, what has happened?"

"He had been doing missionary duty at Corpus Christi, on the Gulf of Mexico," replied the man; "the rains wetted him through and through — and he returned home ill—and this morning he sent me for you, to receive the last Sacrament at your hands."

I threw myself into the tilbury, which set off again at the same speed. I saw an enormous panther on the side of the road; it could not have measured less than five feet from head to tail. Our horse, in his onward career, only snorted twice or thrice at the presence of the monster, and dashed forward, without shying either to the right or left. When we arrived at the house where Father Fitzgerald lived, and which belonged to one of his own countrymen, we met the master at the door, who said to us in his own French: *il est moru*— meaning to convey that the poor priest was dead. Without stopping to inquire into his meaning, I entered the room, and called him by name — but there was no response. His eyes were fixed. I kissed him. His lips were icy cold. He was dead. He was only twenty-six years of age, far from his country and his family and friends, without even the consolations of religion to fortify him at his departure hence. Contemplating this youthful victim of Christian charity, my heart was ready to break;

I fell upon my knees and wept, for I could not pray. I deeply regretted that no friendly voice was there to assuage the sufferings of his last moments, or speak to him of that heaven which he had so justly merited.

The contemplation of this isolation—this dreary solitude in which the poor missionary breathed his last—cast my soul into deep sorrow. Poor Abbé! his grave will be unknown in a foreign land: never will the spot where he lies be hallowed by a friendly visit: no prayer will bless it: nor will it be ever watered by a tear.

Oh! who shall tell of all that passes in the heart of a young missionary, from the day he receives his mother's parting kiss to the day he heaves his last sigh in distant solitude! On my knees, at the foot of that bed whereon the lifeless corpse was stretched, that life of devotedness, of labour, fatigue, and trial, unfolded itself before me as a vast and gloomy panorama, and all ended in death, sudden, unexpected, and solitary. Notwithstanding the sad end of my poor friend, I envied his lot; in his case there were no doubts about the future, for he died in the midst of labour. Then reflecting on myself, I bethought me of my shattered constitution and lost strength. I was not so old as Father Fitzgerald, but yet I was quite spent. Like Abbé Chanrion I looked upon myself as a useless being who, in a short time, would be less a burden to others than to myself.

The life of a disabled missionary, when strength has been exhausted in the fatigues of his ministry, is a truly sad one, humanly speaking. It is painful to him to drag out an existence of dependent idleness on the theatre of his former labours, in the midst of his poor and hard-working colleagues. The hospital, and misery in every shape, await him in his own country.

Whilst he is engaged in preaching the truths of the Gospel, and civilising the people of distant countries, his friends either die or are dispersed here and there—friendships are weakened or become altogether extinct —he becomes in turn a stranger in his own country, but too happy if local or private charity places him in some sinecure, or shelters him from unrelieved necessities of life, where close by his cradle he may await the end of his career, drenched with gall and hidden sufferings. The priest who devotes himself to the foreign missions may say with truth, as his Divine Master: *My Kingdom is not of this world.* He knows that for him there are other thorns than those found in the wild woods, and other sorrows than those experienced on the desert shore. But God who takes the solitary sparrow and the lily of the field under his special protection, bestows on those who have confidence in Him something more precious than the bread they earn by the sweat of their brow—He bestows upon them faith, hope, and charity; and where these Divine virtues exist there is no poverty, no solicitude about the morrow. Animated and strengthened by these, the Christian is enabled to brave all the tempests that rage around him.

Kneeling by the corpse of my departed colleague, I saw that such would be my future lot; I felt that I was not worthy to die for the glorious cause which I had espoused, and my tears fell in abundance. But a ray of Heaven's light revealed to me the sufferings of the Son of God in the garden of Gethsemane; and, like all rays from heaven, it brought peace and resignation to my soul. All fear left me, and I was prepared to make any sacrifices. I offered up fervent prayers for my poor friend, and spent the entire night alone with his corpse.

The next day, aided by a French priest, who came to Victoria, we buried our young fellow-labourer in the little church. The ceremony was simple and touching. Protestants and Catholics shed tears—a tribute of esteem which our departed friend had earned by his virtues.

I left Victoria in very depressed spirits. The weather was dark and rainy; and we were supplied with provisions for three days only. As the rains were likely to continue, we thought it well to lessen the number of our nights under tents, so we changed our route by taking a more northerly direction. As one of the horses which we had left at Victoria, in the care of Father Fitzgerald, had either strayed away, or was stolen, I mounted the remaining one, and Charles rode in the cart. From town to town we changed places, Charles taking my place in the saddle, and I his in the cart. As the roads were becoming heavier as we proceeded, owing to the incessant rain, the mules dragged our cumbrous vehicle through the mud at a very slow pace and with great difficulty. From the first day of our journey I was frozen under my wet garments, and a part of my body had become quite stiff with rheumatism.

Thus we struggled on for five days; at one time battling against the inclemency of the weather; at another against the obstructions of the road. We were not able to spend even one night in a human habitation; for the state of the roads had upset all our previous calculations by retarding our progress. By dint of management we made our provisions last an additional day, yet we had already been fasting for twenty-four hours! We encamped under our cart, but the rain came down in torrents through the holes

and chinks in the wood. While cold and want of rest began to throw me into fever, my fellow-traveller enjoyed a sound sleep, without thinking of either hunger or rain. There are people whose accommodating organisation adapts itself easily to every circumstance — sleep comes at their bidding, and they dispense with food, if necessary, without appearing at all disconcerted by the exigencies of nature.

At length, on the fifth day, on the right of our route, we arrived at a small river which struggles through a deep ravine. I think it is the Cibolo. On the opposite side was a farm-house, where we hoped to be able to procure a dinner. While the German was unyoking his mules, Charles and I descended the ravine, stumbling at every step. Having succeeded in reaching the bottom, we saw a place where the river was covered with pieces of dead timber and trees, which floated on the surface; at every other spot it rushed down in cascades, as the torrents descend the Alps. Pressed by hunger, I made a spring, and running quickly along one of the floating planks, I gained the opposide side. My friend Charles proceeded more slowly, either through laziness, or because he was not so active as I was. The consequence was, that the pieces of timber sinking, and turning under his feet, he lost his balance, and fell down astride of one of them. However, he succeeded at last in joining me, though wet from head to foot by the sudden plunge to which he treated himself. "Oh!" said he, laughing, "a little more or a little less can't make much difference." During this dreary journey, my friend never lost that buoyancy of spirits which characterises Frenchmen, even in the most critical circumstances of life.

A good dinner, and a blazing fire, made us forget all our hardships, and we resumed our journey. The rain ceased for a short time. We had no idea whatever, that our sixth day's journey would be even more disastrous than the preceding. On this day we were obliged to cross a deep creek full of black muddy water. My horse sank in it up to the girths; but, weakened as he was by fatigue, he had no strength left to extricate himself. Accordingly I was obliged to enter the pool, and drag the poor animal out with all my strength. It fared even worse with the cart, which sank so deeply in the mud, that the mules abandoning the task of pulling it through, lay down as quietly as possible in the pool, leaving little hope on our minds that we should be able to induce them to resume their work. While the driver plied his whip, Charles and I shoved at the wheels, but all in vain; so there was nothing for it but to go in search of some farm-house where we might find help in our emergency. Fortunately, we met some Mexicans of the locality, who kindly came to our aid with a team of oxen. These being yoked to the mules' traces succeeded in dragging them, and the cart along with them, to firm ground. The rain, which had ceased a short time, now fell without intermission; my horse stumbled or slipped at every step; and the continual efforts I was obliged to make to keep him from falling fatigued me dreadfully. Besides, the roads became more impracticable every moment, so that the cart wheels sank to the axles in mud in some places.

We had hoped that all our mishaps were now over, and that we could find at length some convenient spot on which to camp for the last time. As misfortune, however, would have it, night came upon us in the

midst of the woods. The croaking of frogs indicated the vicinity of water; and we found that a clearing had been transformed into a lake by the late rains; along its borders the herbage was rich and abundant, so we allowed our animals to roam about and regale themselves. But where were we to spend the night? The road was inundated, the cart was deep in water, and it was quite impossible to penetrate into the wood, so thick were the borders and underwood. To find a convenient spot to camp on, it would be necessary to cross this sheet of water; but we were in complete ignorance of its depth. Accordingly, without more to do, our driver rolled himself up in his blanket, and stretched himself at full length on the boxes in the cart, while Charles and myself seated ourselves on our saddles, with our backs to a tree, and our feet in the water, and thus passed the night. A more terrific storm than we had heretofore experienced, now burst over us; the thunder rolled without intermission; flashes of lightning darted every instant through the heavens, while the forest around us was swept by a hurricane. I leave the reader to imagine whether I could close an eye; want of sleep, cold, and hunger had again brought on fever. I shivered with cold, and yet a violent perspiration covered my whole body; my pulse beat with fearful rapidity; strange noises buzzed in my ears; a vomiting of blood reduced me to the last extremity. In fact, I could bear it no longer.

"Charles," said I to my companion, who was half asleep, "if I remain here longer I shall never be able to leave it; I'll continue my journey."

"It would be madness to do any such thing," said my friend, opening one eye; "you are unacquainted with

the roads, and you would most certainly lose your way."

"Oh!" said I, "I have nothing worse to fear than what I suffer at this moment."

Charles fell asleep again, whilst I saddled my horse, which was in almost as miserable a plight as his master. It was about one o'clock in the morning; and to escape the mud as much as possible, I kept to the right through the wood, but I had not proceeded far when it opened out into a prairie covered with high grass and helianthus, which struck against my face as I proceeded. Still onward I went, without at all reflecting upon the fault I had committed in leaving the beaten path; indeed I thought I was skirting it, until my face and hands were torn by the trees and brushwood which I was obliged to encounter in forcing a passage. After many painful efforts, I arrived at last at a thick copse wood, and here I was brought to a stand-still. I could not move another step. I sought, on every side, some outlet or other, but with no success—the forked lightning, my only guide, indicated no egress. Darkness, the terrific storm, and illness made my head reel; a certain dimness came over my eyes, a burning heat ran through my body, while the surface of my skin was icy cold, and all this was accompanied by a most disagreeable buzzing noise in my head. The storm continued to rage, the thunder pealed with undiminished fury, the wind swept forest and plain, and there was I amid the storms of nature and my own being, alone, without a guide, without an adviser, yea, without strength to escape the tomb which yawned beneath my steps. All energy, both moral and physical, had left me. I felt that my end

was approaching. No human power could afford me any aid.

After having exhausted all the resources of human courage, intelligence, and will, to rescue myself from this terrible position, I addressed myself to God in humble prayer. I cast my eyes towards heaven with one of those last looks in which the whole soul seems to speak. This mute prayer was to me like the sweet dew which falls on a burning atmosphere,—something indescribably soothing pervaded my whole being, and I felt convinced that God watched over me with a fostering care, and that if He, in His wisdom, subjected me to trials it was only to teach me to place less confidence in my own strength, and attach myself more closely to Him. A smile of sweet consolation played about my lips, and I prayed with a tender and child-like fervour that the will of God be accomplished with respect to me, and I knew well that He would not suffer me to perish thus all alone in the woods. Full of confidence in the Divine goodness, I allowed my horse to go where he would. The poor animal went to the left, passed instinctively through the underwood, and came out on the prairie. The reflection of a flash of lightning showed me the route now laid under water. After that I had no desire to turn aside from the beaten track, but rode through waves of mud with perfect composure. In a short time the route became somewhat more elevated, and I traversed a wood of oaks. I felt that my horse had found a dry and solid footing, and notwithstanding the fever which preyed upon me, I enjoyed a moment of happiness. But, alas! how quickly it passed.

It appeared to me that my horse was listening to something; he pricked up his ears, and became uneasy

and restive, he snorted violently, and at last reared, and refused to advance. I was unable to distinguish any object in the dark, and still I was satisfied that the poor animal was not thrown into this state of terror without some cause. I drew one of my pistols from the holster, and struck my spurs into the horse to urge him forward. A frightful mewing then was heard, and two phosphoric lights blazed at twenty paces from me; the mystery was at once solved; it was a tiger or panther, or, perchance, a number of these animals which surrounded me, for my head reeled so that I fancied that burning eye-balls were fixed on me from every side. I had but a brace of pistols; and to wound one of these animals would have been attended with too much danger, to kill it would be impossible, owing to the darkness and the unsteadiness of my aim; I therefore discharged my pistol in the air. My horse, maddened with terror, became quite unmanageable and started off at full speed. I kept well in my saddle. The panthers slunk away to a short distance at the report of the pistol, but they soon returned to within a few feet of the route. From all this I concluded, whilst galloping along, that their dens had been inundated, and that I was in danger every instant of tumbling into some creek. The croaking of frogs, which was becoming more distinct as I proceeded, left no doubt on my mind as to the fact. In a few minutes I heard the splashing of water about the horse's legs, and I felt the cold seizing first my feet, and then running up my limbs at every stride. At last the horse sank in the water up to his breast, stopped suddenly, and, after that, neither words, nor blows, nor spurs affected him in the least. He seemed changed into marble.

I waited an instant, until a flash of lightning showed me where I was. By its rapid light I saw before me a lake formed by the rains. No weeds floated on its surface, which proved to me that it was so deep that it would be sheer madness to attempt to cross it during the night. I accordingly retraced my steps, but not daring to return to the wood, on account of the wild beasts, I dismounted, and leaning my back against a tree, with the water up to my knees, and holding my pistols in my hand, I faced the panthers, which had again returned. I was resolved to sell my life as dearly as possible; however, the panthers contented themselves with making a circuit around me, without approaching too near. Their howling all the time was most appalling. My poor horse was so terror-stricken that, although he was not tied, he remained motionless by my side the whole night. The electric fluid fell with a dreadful crash, within fifteen yards of me. It formed, as it were, a shower of sparks, which set fire to the scanty herbage of the forest. The conflagration spread; I feared, an instant, that it would dislodge me from my position, and then roast me. Fortunately the rain came to my aid, and extinguished it.

At length, this terrible night gave way before the sweet light of the dawn, which came to restore me to life, and to fling its feeble rays around me. My courage and buoyancy of spirits returned. I crossed the lake, which was a mile long—it was a good hour's work. At every step my horse slipped, or stuck fast in the mud, or stumbled and staggered like a drunken man. It was no wonder that I should have heaved a long sigh of satisfaction when the poor beast once set his foot on firm ground. The rain ceased, the sun seemed as if it

had some idea of showing itself, the wind dispersed the clouds,—sun and wind dried my wet clothes. The route was very picturesque: on each side rose graceful hills, whose summits were crowned with white vapour. Thousands of partridges whizzed by me in their rapid flight; herds of deer stood to look at me as I passed, shaking off the while the rain-drops which glistened on their backs. All this gladdened me. Here and there I had to cross small streams of water, but I had no reason to complain. At length the sun appeared, and with him heat, which I so much needed. My hands were as blanched and as wrinkled as the skin of a body which had been three days in the water.

Towards ten o'clock in the forenoon, we arrived at a small river which was quite unknown to me. I thought it was, probably, one of those streams which had been formed by the late rains, and dashed into it in the most gallant manner—indeed, I held it rather in contempt. Now the horses of that country are gifted with an instinct of most astonishing acuteness in discovering danger, and indeed my poor beast was but too susceptible, and since our journey began, became sensitive to a most distressing degree. As soon as the water reached the saddle-girths he stopped, and refused obstinately to advance. I employed prayers and entreaties, I patted him on the neck and encouraged him in every way,—at length I used the whip, but without result. I dismounted at last, and led the poor beast by the bridle. After advancing a few steps, I perceived some nenuphar leaves on the surface of the water, but it never occurred to me that the stems of these leaves might be five or six feet long, and I proceeded boldly into the water with my clothes on. At the first step I was up

to the middle in water—a *début* which frightened me not a little, and I made accordingly a retrograde move. I again mounted my horse, and attempted a passage in other places; but with no success—my horse would not move a step, as soon as the water reached his breast.

This last obstacle, which I knew not how to surmount, and which, nevertheless, must be surmounted in one way or other, threw me quite into despair, although it was far from being the most difficult one I had met with. But it is the last drop which overflows the cup, and my courage completely abandoned me. Ingrate that I was, I dared complain and speak thus to the Almighty: "O my God! this continual suffering is too much for me—my powers of endurance are limited—my trials without end. I have now paid, in devotedness, all I owe to humanity. I shall return to France, to leave it no more." I wept like a child that has some whim ungratified. The next instant I smiled at the abundance of this bitter chalice, which I could not exhaust, and this little attack of folly soon passed. I stretched myself on the grass to dry my clothes. Then resuming all my former energy, I mounted my horse and directed my steps towards the Cibolo.

After an hour's ride, I overtook a cart, and what was my astonishment at recognising our driver and Charles fast asleep on the boxes! I really fancied that I had come from another world, and so overjoyed was I at meeting my friends, that I at once roused them up to embrace them.

"In the name of wonder where are you going?" says Charles.

"To France, I believe," said I, despondingly. "Out upon you!" replied my friend, "What an idea!"

I then related to them all that had happened to me since I left them.

"There is no *creek* in this neighbourhood," said our driver; "it must be some deep ditch or other, which I shall find no difficulty in passing." "We shall soon see."

And forgetting France, I crept upon the cart to accompany them in ascertaining the fact. Having reached the fatal spot, our brave German undressed, entered the water up to his arm-pits, and reached the opposite bank without accident. Confounded and humbled, I exclaimed against my horse's sensitiveness, and my own want of patience. Then we all crossed with little difficulty. My poor foundered horse was tied to the back of the cart, and my fellow-travellers resumed their sleep, which had been interrupted for the moment, and I tried to imitate them. In an instant or two, I was suddenly roused from my slumber by a terrific shock, which sent men, beasts, and boxes, rolling one over the other.

The fact was, that we tumbled down a ravine which crossed the road, but, in our drowsiness, we had not perceived it. By a special intervention of Providence we all escaped unhurt. This little incident amused us very much, and we all three laughed heartily at an adventure which kept us awake the rest of the day.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, the crowing of a cock announced the vicinity of a farm; and in a few minutes afterwards we descried, through thick foliage of mesquites and oaks, a small house, round which oxen, cows, and sheep were lying. We entered, and a tall meagre woman asked us what we wanted.

"A dinner, if at all possible," I replied, "for we are dying of hunger."

"You shall have some in half-an-hour," said the

good woman, "but in the meantime you may go into the next room, and while away the time at the piano."

"Many thanks, Madam, but at this moment my teeth have far greater need of something to do than my fingers; with your permission, I will amuse myself in grooming my horse a little."

And then I began to rack my brain in trying to account for the presence of a piano in this spot. The dinner soon made its appearance, and was devoured in an instant. Having settled accounts with the good woman of the house, I saddled my horse, and set off again alone. I had hardly left the farm when a torrent of rain wetted me to the skin; however, I took all in good part, as I was now very near the end of my journey. As I crossed the Salado, I thought I perceived on my route three Indians, who seemed resolved to oppose my passage. Now I had seen too many alarming objects for the last twenty-four hours to be easily terrified; so I passed on without flinching. The Indians were three enormous trunks of charred trees, surrounded by a reddish herbage, and my sickly imagination represented them as so many giants, with black, red, and yellow stripes. At length, I heard the bells of San Fernando ringing the Angelus; I was at San Antonio, and therefore proceeded in all haste to the curé's house.

The good man gave me a glass of Alicante, which I drank off at once, and having wrapt a triple blanket around me, I fell into a profound sleep which lasted twenty-six hours. I awoke at last, but it was bed-time for every one else. Having chatted a little with the curé, I lay down again, and slept more soundly than ever.

CHAP. VII.

ASSASSINATIONS AT SAN ANTONIO. — THE RANGERS. — A PARTY OF PLEASURE. — A THREAT NOT FOLLOWED UP. — TOO MANY GOURDS, AND NOT SUFFICIENT FOOD. — A WINTER NIGHT. — CHRISTMAS EVE. — HOW TO BUILD A FINE CHURCH AT A CHEAP RATE. — AN EASY VICTORY. — DEPARTURE FROM CASTROVILLE. — MY FAREWELL. — A FRIEND TURNED ENEMY. — A PEDESTRIAN JOURNEY THROUGH THE PRAIRIES. — ARRIVAL IN FRANCE.

THE next day I went to Castroville, and on my way I met one of my parishioners who was assassinated a few minutes after we parted, and the assassin stole his horse, which was not worth forty piastres. San Antonio was notorious for assassinations; the knives of the Mexicans and the American revolvers were in constant use; and deeds of bloodshed were of hourly occurrence. One day a half-drunken cavalier, armed to the teeth, entered a bar-room to drink a glass of brandy; the waiter asked if he had money to pay for it, at which the other took offence and levelled his revolver to fire at him; but the pistol missed fire, and the waiter seized an enormous knife, sprung on the cavalier, and laid his breast open with two ghastly wounds. He then placed the corpse of the murdered man on his horse, and turned it from the door. On another occasion a Presbyterian, on feeling a strong impulse to kill somebody or anybody, went to the house of his own minister, and fired at him twice, but fortunately the bullets only grazed his hat. As I was going to say Mass one morning, a Mexican who was sweeping at the threshold of his house, inadvertently

whisked the dust upon an American who was walking by. The American drew his knife, threw himself upon the poor defenceless sweeper, and gave him seventeen severe wounds in the head and shoulders. Such acts were of almost daily occurrence.

The greater part of the murders were committed by the Rangers—volunteers of the American army who were disbanded after the treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo, and had engaged themselves to Texas for the pursuit of the Indians. They are the very dregs of society, and the most degraded of human creatures.

These blood-thirsty men, who have neither faith nor moral feeling, massacred a whole division of the Lipan tribe, who were quietly encamped near Castroville: they slew all, neither woman nor child was spared. They rifled the dead bodies of their clothing, in which half the assassins clothed themselves, and then amused themselves by a sham battle.

A colonist, who was out in search of his cattle, heard the report of their fire-arms, saw the mimic fight from a distance, and mistook it for a real attack of the Indians. The inhabitants of Castroville armed themselves; sent out patrols night and day, and barricaded the town; but not until two days after did they ascertain the truth. The Rangers having become the scourge of the colonists were replaced by regular troops in 1850. It is true these troops were always insufficient in number to protect the country, but the moral effect of their presence was nevertheless beneficial. Their camp was generally composed of one company of dragoons and one of infantry. These companies were each supposed to number sixty men, but at times there were not six to serve under each flag. The bad

treatment which the soldiers received caused them to desert, and take with them arms and baggage.

The head quarters of the Texian army was San Antonio, where I once saw a review on the Grande Place, in which poles were erected at intervals to regulate the movements. The band was composed of twelve performers; the officers and staff were eight in number; and the rank and file amounted to four men, of whom one was a serjeant. The absurdity of holding such a review was pointed out to the general in command, and he has since abstained from any exhibition of the kind. In some camps there was a total absence of cavalry; hence if it was found necessary to pursue the Indians they put their infantry soldiers on horseback; but the greater number of them had the utmost difficulty in keeping in the saddle, and were totally unable to use their weapons while on horseback.

On the banks of the Rio Grande, the Indians were once nearly taking prisoners a whole company of mounted infantry (as they are called). To go always well armed was certainly the surest protection for the colonists. I found a letter from the Abbé Dubuis at Castroville, in which he begged me to rejoin him at Braunfels, where he was building (or constructing) a church of wood. I gave the house in charge to Charles, and returned to San Antonio, where I had left my horse. To avoid the delays and accidents of walking I took the poste, which was on this line a tolerably good vehicle, and to my great surprise I arrived at Braunfels without accident.

I spent three days with my fellow-labourer, whom I aided in his work, while each related to the other what he had done while separated; and we mutually

formed plans for the speedy erection of our future church.

On the third day the abbé came to me with a beaming face to say that he was about to procure for me a real party of pleasure: "It is," said he, "an excellent opportunity of returning to San Antonio without costing us a centime." I blindly accepted the offer without asking him further particulars as to this agreeable and economical arrangement. We had wound up all our ecclesiastical business at Braunfels by five o'clock in the evening, when the Abbé Dubuis told me he had still two baptisms to administer at a cabin on the road to San Antonio, three miles from Braunfels, but that he would go there on foot and rejoin us as we passed. I was to go with an Alsacian family, who had a cart loaded with fowls; hence I was to be borne along with the chickens, &c. The Abbé Dubuis started first, and a little before sunset I saw the cart arrive; it was a wretched vehicle all disjointed, and dragged along by a miserable horse so emaciated that he was scarcely able to keep on his legs. This sight made me regret the credulity with which I had accepted the pleasant arrangement which the abbé had made for me. I found this *opportunity* very miserable, and regretted that I had not taken the poste; but it was then too late, so I got on the cart with what resignation I could. The road was bad, having been torn up by the heavy rains and hardened suddenly by the rays of a scorching sun. The ruts had become hard as stone, so that each step of the horse caused a horrible jolt and rendered it quite unbearable; so I got down and walked. When we came to a hollow both horse and cart stuck fast in the mud, and we were also obliged to get into it to pull them out. The wife pulled the horse, while the wheels were pushed by her

husband, the Alsacian, and myself. When this feat was accomplished I was in such a state of filth, that it would have taken a second tun of water to cleanse me. I continued my walk, grumbling against the abbé's pleasant *opportunities*, which I made a promise no more to embrace. The abbé, having administered the baptisms, set out without waiting for us. At midnight I perceived two objects resembling dead bodies lying across the road. "Who goes there?" I cried out in English. "A friend," responded the abbé's well-known voice. "Well," I asked, "what are you doing stretched there?" "I was sleeping while waiting for you." "I thank you very much for the pleasant journey which you procured me. I have been obliged to come on foot, the wretched jaded horse not being able to draw me and the fowls along; that is what *you* call a party of pleasure." While listening to my complaints the abbé shouted with laughter, so I followed his example, as I could not get really angry. He had with him a German of immense stature, who was awaked by the noise of the cart. The horse was unyoked and we encamped. The Alsacian gave us a supper of cold meat, after which we fell asleep upon the ground, without any bed-covering. The next day we halted for breakfast at the Cibolo; whence the abbé, the German, and I, afterwards continued our journey on foot. It was then the end of August, and the heat was so excessive, that we perspired from every pore. It was about mid-day when we arrived at San Antonio; and I was foot-sore, besides being worn out with fatigue. The Abbé Dubuis came to me an hour after to say that he had found another opportunity of going to Castroville free of expense; and that he recommended me to embrace it with him. I thanked him warmly,

knowing how to appreciate what he called parties of pleasure, and merely said that having a horse at my command I should set out as soon as I had rested a little. At five o'clock I commenced my solitary journey, a little annoyed at having again to travel by night: but on account of our school I did not wish to be absent from Castroville when the Abbé Dubuis was not there; so that I scarcely slept at San Antonio. I was overtaken in the plain by my *confrère*, who was in a fine carriage drawn by magnificent horses: he passed me like lightning, making a sign to me to keep up with him. I galloped fast to keep up; and we arrived at the creek of the Leona in a few minutes. There was a European doctor with the abbé in the carriage, and a planter from Vandenberg, who resembled Don Quixote de la Mancha, both in character and appearance. We all four supped at the water's edge; and afterwards the doctor returned with his carriage to San Antonio, while the abbé and the planter watched the arrival of an Alsacian, who was to pass with a cart drawn by oxen. The Alsacian arrived: his cart was loaded with chests and sacks of Indian corn, and the abbé and the planter seated themselves thereon; but I accompanied them on horseback. At nightfall they unyoked the oxen to let them graze; and we slept till midnight, after a slight repast of water-melons and cheese. When we recommenced our journey, on the invitation of the abbé, I took a place beside my companions on a chest of soap, while the bridle of my horse was tied to the back of the cart, which was made of two trees fastened upon two axles. The chests and sacks were heaped upon each other without any care, so that I not only found it difficult to find a com-

fortable seat, but even one that was endurable — nothing but sharp angles striking me in every direction, and nearly breaking my limbs at every jolt; besides, I felt that my right leg was exposed to much too cold a temperature. "Why there are currents of air blowing through this vehicle," said I to the abbé. "No wonder," he replied, "for it has no bottom." I stooped down to discover whence this unusual cold proceeded, when a splash of water dashed in my face. The enigma was solved. There was a barrel of water near me which had been fastened up with straw, which had slipped out, and each jolt sent a little shower-bath over my leg. Finally we arrived at Castroville. And on the first Sunday after our return, we called together the colonists after mass, to make them promise to bring the materials necessary for the construction of a church, and to engage on our part to commence the work as soon as the wood and stone should arrive.

It was summer, and the colonists were still engaged getting in their crops, so that they could not attend much to the stones for the church. The Abbé Dubuis profited by this season of forced inactivity to go to Gonzales, a little town of the interior where one of our colleagues resided, to enjoy a few days' rest, of which he was much in need, but which he could never obtain at Castroville, where he was unceasingly beset by the inhabitants. While awaiting his return I resumed my ordinary occupations; that is to say, the teaching of the children of the school, and the administration of the sacraments in all the colonies of the mission; eating pumpkins fourteen times a week, in default of other food; never allowing myself to be discouraged by the trials and hardships of a precarious and wandering life; doing my

duty with zeal, but without enthusiasm; and accepting with pleasure the good or ill that it pleased Divine Providence to send me. During the absence of my *confrère* I was placed in one of those painful and embarrassing positions in which the priest, in conformity with ecclesiastical discipline, is obliged to show the severity of the judge, when he would wish to show the indulgence of a friend. Thank God, I got out of it pretty well. A rich colonist of the Greek Church wished to have his child baptized in the Roman Catholic faith; but the god-father and god-mother being Protestants, I had no security that the child would be brought up and educated a Catholic. I told the parents that without this assurance I could not baptize the child, and that either the god-father or god-mother must be a Roman Catholic. The father replied that with his gun he would force me to baptize his child. This answer was not likely to alter my resolution; it would besides have been against my duty to have yielded to such coercion, and caused a great scandal, for my flock would certainly have attributed any relaxation of ecclesiastical discipline, had I had the weakness to make it, to the high social position of the parents. I therefore took no notice of the threat, and went next day to Dhanis to celebrate a marriage. I travelled in company with a Swiss merchant, for whom I had a great regard, though he was a Protestant. He was going to the camp on business, and as I could serve his interests there, he offered me a place in his vehicle. When we had arrived at the wood of Vandenberg, we saw galloping after us the sheriff, who was no other than the god-father whom I had refused on the preceding evening. He also was going to Dhanis, and wished to make the journey with us for

further security. To prove to him that the strictness of my duty had nothing to do with persons beyond my ministry, I offered him my hand, which he accepted, and we all three breakfasted on the provisions which we had brought with us. At the camp I had the good fortune to be useful to my companions, and we went to Dhanis together for the celebration of the marriage. The sheriff was one of the witnesses.

Unfortunately the intended bridegroom had forgotten to get the civil licence at Castroville, without which a priest or minister could not celebrate a marriage save at the risk of a fine of five hundred piastres, besides imprisonment. Not to put myself in the power of the law I refused to perform the marriage until the parties should have procured the licence. The young couple and their relatives were very much grieved at this delay. The sheriff then begged of me to perform the marriage ceremony, promising at the same time that he would take out the licence immediately on his arrival at Castroville and bring it to me himself. I consented to this arrangement, but not without impressing upon the sheriff that I thus gave a proof of great confidence in his sincerity and good faith. He felt gratified by this confidence, and was ever after my devoted friend. On his return the Abbé Dubuis found Charles and myself in a state of complete destitution; our parishioners had not become more generous, we had eaten our last morsel of bacon, and since this sad meal we were entirely reduced to Indian corn and coffee. One day when I had nothing but a few eggs I went to the woods for a faggot to cook them, and knocked at door after door asking for a little butter to dress them and some meal to make a little bread. I was refused in the

politest manner possible; and on that day it was only after repeated visits that I obtained something to eat through the compassion of a kind old woman. The pumpkins of our garden were always our greatest resource. We dressed this insipid vegetable with all kinds of sauces, and used many ingenious expedients to try, if possible, to give it some flavour, but it had become so repugnant to us that it was only with a great effort that we could eat it at all. I had in my hands the money which had been collected for the construction of the church, but it was a sacred deposit which no one had a right to touch.

The Abbé Dubuis wished to put an end to this miserable state of things, and after the sermon on the following Sunday he addressed the faithful, reminding them of the good which we had done to the colony both materially and morally.—"We teach seventy-two of your children, and yet you give nothing, not even for their books, which we often furnish gratis. We are about to build a church which will cost you scarcely anything, thanks to our collections, and still you leave us to die of hunger. Call to mind that on one occasion I was not able to preach because I had had no food for forty-eight hours; and that my first colleague, the Abbé Chazelle, died of want still more than of grief. Thus, since we are made up of bones and flesh and cannot exist without food, we give you warning that to-morrow we shall quit this colony to seek a residence where more consideration will be shown for us, if from this day forward you do not provide us with the means of living for each mouth (and in advance), whether in money or in kind, and a half piastre over and above for each pupil attending the school—(the children of

widows and of the poor we except from this rule). If the first instalment is not paid in before this evening, to-morrow you will no longer see us." The flock was ashamed of its avarice; a collection was made on the spot; and from that day forth we suffered no more from hunger. The winter came, that is to say the time to build a church; the materials commenced to arrive, but only slowly, and they were not accumulated in sufficient quantity till after the feast of Christmas. Wishing to give this solemn festival still more brilliance than to Easter, I went to San Antonio to procure some cloths to ornament our little temporary church, and returned to Castroville the same evening. The night was so dark that I could scarcely see my horse's head; a close and sleety rain fell, which rendered the road slippery and dangerous; and my cloak was stiffened with a thick layer of sleet. I suffered terribly from this unusual cold. My hands, which were purple, could no longer hold the bridle, and I let my horse take his own course. The time that I was in the chapral appeared so long that I thought I had lost my way, and had I not had the fear of being frozen to death I should have waited the dawn of day under some of the trees. Calling to mind that the colonists had set out an hour before me with a cart full of provisions, I concluded that they had probably encamped on the plain of the Leona, and that I should soon see their fires if I had not lost my way. I soon perceived their fires and advanced, and in order to warm myself I commenced to chew tobacco. It was but too effective, for I became hot and feverish with headache and giddiness accompanied by a kind of vertigo. At the expiration of an hour I saw a fire upon the horizon; it seemed to advance by describing a circle, and to approach

me gradually. For a moment I thought it was *le cheval de la mort* of the Indians, the poetic superstition of old America; then it occurred to me that it must be the fire in the encampment of the colonists, and that my vertigo gave it a circular motion. Literally speaking, when the fire appeared to stop I was no further from it than ten steps. Being then sure that I had not gone astray I exchanged salutations with my parishioners and continued on my way. I heard the wolves howling near me in the plain of Castroville: my horse being terrified I made him gallop; but the howlings came nearer and nearer, while the darkness prevented me from observing the number of the animals by which we were thus pursued. At last I arrived at home and promised solemnly to travel no more by night. But unfortunately we were seldom able to choose our own hours. The church was on this occasion ornamented with unusual splendour, thanks to the gifts which I had received in Louisiana. The colonists were struck with astonishment and regretted that our new church was not yet constructed. As I was to sing the midnight mass on Christmas Eve I went early to bed to get over the effect of my night journey, but I was awaked at eleven o'clock by the harmonious voices of a choir of young men who sang a German Christmas hymn in compliment to me, for the 25th of December was my birthday. I rose to thank them, but they had already disappeared. The temperature had become milder; it was a starlight night, and our little cottage was filled with colonists who came to congratulate us, bringing us at the same time cakes and pork. In the midst of the hearty gaiety which was about me, I could scarcely shake off a vague sadness by which I was oppressed. Already had four years passed away since this *fête* had

been a family festival; and my imagination bore me back to other times when friends and parental caresses were not absent at this holy season. Alas! life seems to be but a perpetual farewell to men and things.

I shook off these obtrusive thoughts as a cumbrous garment, and proceeded to the church, where I had prepared a treat for my parishioners. While dressing, and without being seen by any one, I lighted a flame of red Bengal fire, which was concealed behind a basket of flowers. I had on a vestment of cloth of gold, and at the moment when I gave out the Te Deum the flame suddenly illuminated the church like an Aurora Borealis; the gold, the crystals, the chandeliers, the hangings, the flowers, were all dazzling. The congregation seemed electrified; the sacred hymn was chaunted with redoubled zeal and energy; but the proverb says, "there's no fire without smoke," and that had not entered into my calculation. With the flame rose clouds of smoke, which soon nearly suffocated us, and the whole congregation coughed in a frightful manner for nearly five minutes; fortunately our church had openings in all directions and the smoke cleared off easily. After the festival of Christmas, we were able to commence the foundations of our new church. The architecture was to be in the Gothic style, and the building large enough to accommodate the entire population. But our means were much more circumscribed than our projects; we were in want of machinery; it was impossible to find a single pulley in the whole colony; hence we were compelled to lift stones and beams of timber with the sole force of our arms. Against the wages of masons and carpenters, we had not two thousand francs; and not being able to surmount this obstacle, we

resolved to get round it. The Abbé Dubuis decided upon our doing ourselves the greater part of the carpenter's work, under the direction of the carpenters, who would only be our instructors, and we their pupils; they had but to mark on the felled trees what we should cut or saw; and thus we spared their work as much as possible. In economising our funds the Abbé Dubuis was very clever; and by his contrivances, intelligence, and economy, we succeeded in reducing our expenses in extraordinary proportions. It was not enough that our construction should be fine, it must also be solid — the greater part being of stone. Meantime the wages of a stone cutter for a great number of days would have swallowed up an immense sum. Hence we went to the woods in search of stones ready cut, and found near the surface quite a quarry of stones smoothed and squared, measuring from eight to ten inches in thickness and of different sizes. Some that were ten feet long by four feet wide served as steps for the stairs, others not so large were used for the basements and the windows.

In the absence of machines to poise these unusual weights, recourse was had to the simplest and most ingenious plans. When the cart was drawn by the oxen as near as possible to the large masses of stone, we took off the wheels and the body of the cart fell to the ground; then being provided with oak levers, we pushed the blocks of stone on wooden rollers into the cart. This task accomplished, we went together to one of the axles to lift it and place a stone underneath; then we went round to the other to perform the same operation; afterwards we returned to the first to raise it still further and place a second stone under it; and so on, until we

had the axles at the necessary height. It was then easy to replace the wheels and proceed to the town. A greenish grey stone which was easy to cut answered for the carving of an escutcheon and crosses to ornament the top of the portal. To procure lime, we went at the head of eight or ten colonists to a limestone quarry, where it was easy to get plenty of stones. We made a heap of brambles and dead wood, and placed upon it a layer of limestones, then piled on branches and wood so as to form a sort of pyramid, set fire to the wood, and went away. We returned three days after, and found nearly eighty barrels of excellent lime. The sand we took from the river; but it was more difficult to get building-timber.

In this country, where the north winds prevail, few large trees of hard wood are quite straight; plenty could have been found on the banks of the Medina, but they were private property, and had a certain pecuniary value. Scarcely any remained which were not private property, and those few the colonists cut down to make boards which they sold at San Antonio. We were obliged to go and search the woods; where we found eight enormous oaks, thirty feet high, perfectly straight, and admirably suited to our purposes. They were felled, and placed on the carts in the same manner as the blocks of stone, and were intended for the pillars and supports of the roof of the middle nave. Several fine mesquites served for the wood-work of the windows. Mesquite wood resembles mahogany, and is as hard as stone. The colonists who had leisure undertook to supply us with the necessary materials for the rafters, for covering in the three naves, and for the steeple. These preparations concluded, it

was necessary to commence operations; and accordingly the Abbé Dubuis and I set to work with saw and hatchet like real carpenters. I was not very handy at this work; and even when I laid aside the saw and axe to use the hammer and chisel, to carve the cross and scutcheon on the stone for the front, my hands became covered with blisters, and were so painful that I was obliged to desist; the Abbé Dubuis was on the contrary quite indefatigable.

We taught the children only from the morning till twelve at noon; and although teaching was not congenial to me, I much preferred it to carpenter's work and stone-cutting; so I took my fellow-labourer's place at the school, while he replaced me at the works. Thus, I carved and sawed in the afternoon only, which suited me much better and tended to forward the works; for the Abbé Dubuis got on with them much more cleverly than I. Nothing tired him: he rested while going hither and thither in search of everything that could be serviceable to our undertaking. We perceived one day that we were in want of beams for the wood-work of the steeple; the Abbé hunted about until he found some pine trees on neutral ground by the banks of the river; he hesitated not to plunge to the waist in the river in order to cut these trees at the root; this work took an entire day in the month of January. I cannot imagine how he got through it without taking cold at least. One day as I was busy rounding little deal boards with a knife, and cutting them into scales to cover the roof of the steeple (or tower), a little adventure obliged me to be somewhat energetic. One of our colonists who had never entered a church, but had lived in a state of perpetual intoxication, and been a shame and scandal to the colony, died drunk at mid-

day in the street. I refused to be present at his funeral, whether as priest, or as a simple inhabitant of Castroville. This refusal was a necessary example, for the least weakness shown in the performance of the duties of the priest, the slightest relaxation of the just and salutary strictness of the church, would place the missionary at the mercy of the first comer. In this country, where the laws do not suffice for individual protection, if evil-doers think they can by any means overcome your resistance without much risk to themselves, you are lost. So when the relatives of the deceased imperatively demanded my presence at the funeral, I peremptorily declined. "If you won't bury him with good will, we'll make you do so by force." I then quietly took off my soutane, and said, "Now you no longer have to deal with a priest, but with a Frenchman who knows how to make his dwelling respected, and who, should you unfortunately attack with firearms, has a brace of pistols to reply to yours." "We shall see," said they. "Yes, we shall see," I replied, and recommenced my work; having several thousand little boards to arrange for the steeple, I had no desire to lose time. They returned in half an hour, four in number, with guns and pistols, determined, if not to kill, at least to terrify me. On seeing them coming, I seized my pistols, which were not loaded, opened the door, and aimed my inoffensive weapons at the breasts of the two foremost. "Advance not," said I, "or I fire;" they paused immediately, awed by my attitude, or perhaps believing in a real danger. "If the young priest says he will fire, be certain that he will do so," said one to his companions. This remark caused them to retreat, and I returned to my boards.

The necessity of self-defence explains why all go more or less armed in the western part of Texas; it is also necessary that the arms should be distinctly seen, otherwise you risk being insulted by drunken rioters, a numerous and formidable party in that country.

The construction of the church advanced rapidly; the walls were built; the masons worked at the steeple; and, without waiting for its completion, we put up the eight pillars intended for the middle nave, a difficult task; for it was not only necessary to raise enormous oaks to a perpendicular position, but also to place them, without pulleys or machinery, on bases of stone two feet high. Fortunately the town contained many inhabitants of Herculean strength; these we called together, and with their stalwart arms in the course of one day they placed the eight pillars without accident on their pedestals. The rapid progress of our works excited the curiosity and interest of the colonists, who often gathered together in numerous groups to admire the new edifice, and, while there, and animated by our example, they lent us a helping hand so long as they could be made useful to us. The children of the school undertook the preparation of the mortar, and went in the afternoons to the river to fetch the water and sand for it. The Abbé Dubuis was one day mixing the mortar, being dressed in a red flannel shirt, trowsers of blue cotton, a hat without form or colour, and his entire person bespattered with lime and plaster; when a young Irish merchant named Thomas Dwyer, in passing through Castroville, asked him where was the Abbé Dubuis? The Abbé went to a pool of water, rapidly washed his face, and cried out, "Here he is; what do you want him for?" "Ah!" replied the

young man, laughing, "how could I recognise you with your face all besmeared, and your many-coloured garments." And in his character of Irishman, that is to say, of pious and generous Catholic, he gave ten piastres for our church; but, notwithstanding those ten unexpected piastres, our purse grew low in proportion to the elevation of our building. For economy, the abbé and I were obliged to work without hired labour, and by ourselves we did the greater part of the roofing and windows. Sometimes, when we could not do without a workman, we were obliged to give him a pair of boots or shoes, a shirt, or some other garment as payment. I sold my famed fifteen-franc horse, which had been for several months in the woods, and the price of him paid the workmen for some days. Thus we succeeded in finishing our church in about three months without getting into debt, which was almost a miracle in the United States, where charitable subscriptions are as illusory as they are numerous. In order to hide the rafters of the interior of the roof, I covered them with manta (a very strong unbleached cotton), and painted Gothic designs upon it. The effect was beautiful; and to crown our good fortune, we found, a little later at Galveston, some painted glass, representing the history of St. Louis, and portraits of some of the princes of the house of Bourbon; these fitted our windows admirably, and as our church was dedicated to St. Louis, we could not have found anything to suit us better.

Easter-day, 1850, came at last; it was the fifth that we had spent far away from France. Our church, which was quite finished, appeared in all its beauty, and in it we celebrated, with great solemnity, the holy

sacrifice of the mass. This was a great event for all the surrounding country. The church had cost us about 130*l.*, and it was certainly worth more than 1600*l.* The smallness of the cost surprised every one, both at San Antonio and at Castroville. People came from curiosity to see it, and they could not at all comprehend how it could be so large and so handsome for so small a sum. This great success surpassed our most sanguine expectations; but the efforts necessary to ensure it had worn us out; continual journeys, fatigues, and privations of every sort, with poor and insufficient food, had much impaired our health, and the construction of our church ruined it. We spat blood. My coadjutor, who was older, more robust, and inured to hardship, suffered less than I, and could even still work; but I had constant, acute rheumatism, and an increasing, racking cough. I could not kneel for five minutes without fainting, and constantly recurring nervous spasms rendered it impossible for me to say mass every day. Hence to avoid falling into a state of incurable lassitude, dragging on a sickly and burthensome body, as was the case of the poor Abbé Chanrion, we both resolved to return to France, to seek repose and health in our native air. It was not easily done, for we were without money; but, after all, it is not more difficult to travel without money, than to build a church under similar circumstances, so we dispensed with it, and had now only to ask the Bishop's consent, but of that we considered ourselves sure. We put off our departure, however, till the week after the Easter holidays, as it was necessary for me to go to San Antonio to confess the Germans and Alsacians in the town and neighbourhood, and to administer to them the Easter communion. I also

wished to sell a few things which I still possessed, in order to make some little provision for the journey, while waiting for the Abbé Dubuis. My preparations were soon made, and I bade adieu to this colony, where I had borne many trials, and sometimes shed tears in secret; but where I had also felt joy and consolation at the sight of the good of which I had been instrumental. This good was not religious and moral only, it was also material and tangible. We had induced Charles to establish a warehouse at Castroville, for the sale of all sorts of merchandise and utensils used by the colonists, who hitherto had had to go to San Antonio for everything, and to pay much higher prices. The building of the church proved to the colonists that they could replace their miserable huts by good solid houses of wood and stone, at a trifling cost. This example so impressed them, that land in the neighbourhood became threefold more valuable, and as they all were proprietors of a good extent of land, they became comparatively wealthy. Our theoretical knowledge and advice on agriculture had also proved very useful. Indian corn was better cultivated, every stalk bearing two or three heads, each of which contained from 800 to 1,400 grains, which was a return of two or three thousand for one. In the furrows they raised melons and water-melons, which sold at San Antonio for 5*d.* each; and they commenced to sow wheat, which succeeded well, besides raising a great variety of vegetables equally useful and productive. On the other hand, their efforts to grow the vine had proved unsuccessful, the great drought causing it to perish; but grafts of the European vine upon the native plant had succeeded satisfactorily. Joy and confidence animated the inhabi-

tants, who saw their own prosperity increase while their colony throve and extended.

When quitting my poor little cabin, into which the wind and rain entered, where weeds grew and insects crawled, sighs of regret burst from my heart, and I vainly tried to restrain my tears, while taking a last look at my suspended hammock, on which I had so often slept beneath a starry sky. I thought how dear to me had been those hours of silence, repose, and obscurity. Memory brought back the balmy breeze laden with the fresh odours of the forest trees, as it had often cooled my fevered brow, and the plaintive voice of the bird of Paradise, or, as it is called by the inhabitants, the widow bird, whose melancholy cry is heard above the murmurs of the river and the forest trees. While taking a last farewell of the lonely grave of the Abbé Chazelle, and kneeling upon the violets and mignionette which grew upon and embalmed it, I wept like a child at the thought that my hands should no longer tend, nor my lips pour out their most fervent prayers beside it. It was not without regret that I quitted those scenes of nature so bold, so luxuriant in tropical vegetation, where I had witnessed scenes and incidents so various, and felt such different emotions, sentiments, and thoughts follow each other in rapid succession; where every year seemed to me to have had the duration of a hundred, so fully had my days, hours, and minutes been occupied. I even bade adieu to the domestic animals about me, those honest companions of daily life; and with a full heart, looking a fond and sad farewell upon all surrounding and familiar objects, I mounted my horse, and proceeded slowly on my journey, stopping from time to time at those scenes or objects which

recalled past actions, thoughts, or feelings. For the last time I crossed the little river Medina, which was full of variety with its graceful windings and rapids, now rushing turbulently over a bed of rocks, and again flowing smoothly and innocently under a dome of verdure. I hailed again those vast plains and the roebucks which gambolled and disported there; and verily do I believe that I even regretted the rattlesnakes which had so often terrified me. I had become a regular child of the woods and plains, had taken up the habits of a wandering life in the new world, and become accustomed to this hard-worked and laborious existence. I was no longer a man of European habits or society, and France was about to appear to me as a country over-civilised, too monotonous and prosaic, and foreign to my tastes, which had become rather wild. It would seem as though one half of man's life was passed in regretting the other. Nevertheless my heart beat violently when I thought of my country, my family, and friends.

After some days the Abbé Dubuis rejoined me at Castroville, but not without having again risked his life. A mason of Castroville had asked a young girl in marriage, but had been refused because she was engaged to be married to another. The mason told the abbé that he would kill him and me also, if he celebrated the marriage between his rival and the girl. It was useless for the abbé to point out to him that we had not the regulation of affairs of the heart, and that we could not refuse our ministry to those who asked it, where no lawful impediment existed—he would not listen to any reasoning. The marriage was celebrated notwithstanding, and the Abbé Dubuis set out for San Antonio the following morning, accompanied by a few

armed colonists. On the opposite shore, at the ford of the Medina, he saw the mason armed to the teeth, and ready to fire upon the first who should advance; so to prevent accident, he and his companions resolved to cross the river at another point. The mason understood this manœuvre, and galloped off towards a part of the road which the abbé was obliged to pass. The colonists wished to accompany him to San Antonio, but he sent them back at the end of fifteen miles, either fearing a murderous collision, or thinking their aid of no use. Nevertheless he looked anxiously into every thicket and clump of trees, and when he had arrived at the rancho of the Leona, it occurred to him that the thicket and underwood which bordered this little creek were favourable to the criminal projects of his enemy, and he prudently crossed it at full gallop. He had rightly guessed, for the mason was in the wood, but did not expect the abbé so soon, and suddenly seeing him pass so rapidly, he had not time to take aim. While dismounting from his horse at San Antonio, the abbé cried out to me, "Do not stir out, or you are a dead man!"

"Ha! what is the matter now?" I anxiously enquired.

"The matter is, that your friend the mason — the same that I had heard singing a few days after my arrival at San Antonio — wishes to kill you, and that I barely escaped with my life."

The abbé related to me his adventure; so we prudently kept within doors at night, and went out by day only when obliged to do so. Having but little money, we were forced to go to Lavaca on foot while two Mexicans undertook the transport of our boxes and

provisions on their heavy carts, for a few piastres. A young Frenchman who was returning to France joined our party, and was delighted with the free and adventurous life which we were about to lead—it had at least for him all the charms of novelty and variety.

I knew by experience how painful and fatiguing the inclemency of the weather, the sand, and bad roads rendered this kind of journey. I was a bad walker, and dreaded having to go a hundred leagues on foot under a sky which seemed on fire even in the month of March; but to the Abbé Dubuis all this seemed a trifle. We encamped the first day on the skirts of a wood where were many pools of water covered with wild ducks, of which I killed five at one shot. Our Mexicans had taken the precaution to bring a pot, and we all did our best towards the preparation of dinner, one taking care to keep up the fire and another to pluck the ducks, while the cooking fell to my lot. We made an excellent dinner, which, in conjunction with the good humour and gaiety of my companions, soon enabled me to forget the fatigues of the day. On the following day we had to cross the creek of the Calavera, which flows through a deep and steep ravine. Our tired compatriot remained lying on one of the carts. Having ourselves arrived at the opposite side the abbé and I looked with anxiety towards the oxen as they mounted the ascent with considerable difficulty; but suddenly the bolt which held the pole broke, and the cart was precipitated into the ravine; while the oxen continued their journey as if nothing had happened. Our fellow countryman who was lying on the trunks was somewhat startled, but escaped unhurt. We now encamped near San Antonio, where our Mexicans made fishing-lines, with what I know not, nor how,

but they caught three enormous fish; and thus we had both abundance and variety for our repast.

On the fifth morning, at sunrise, we found ourselves in a magnificent wood of fragrant cedars. The air was pure and fresh, and the abbé and I, as was our usual habit, entered into meditation while walking along. I saw a little bird which was unable to fly hop out from the brambles; I caught it without any difficulty, and showed it to the Abbé Dubuis, who examined it and found an excrescence of hard skin growing upon the tongue, so that it could not eat. Not having a pin at hand, the abbé took a thorn and very cleverly removed the excrescence, made the little bird swallow a few drops of water, and then set it at liberty. Feeling itself immediately relieved, it fluttered about the wood, sending forth little notes of thanks and contentment. On the sixth day, which was Saturday, we had to cross a great plain on which were neither trees nor brambles; so before entering upon it, we were obliged to gather firewood for our evening's encampment. Our provision of blocks being nearly exhausted, our good humour somewhat worn out, the distance we had to traverse seemed to us a terrible length. Besides we were in want of water, and had nothing for supper but a box of Sardines, and some cheese instead of bread. As I was about to lie down to sleep upon the grass, the abbé said to me, "Smoke a pipe, it will take away your thirst, and let us chat awhile." But not approving of this kind of refreshment, I went to sleep. At one o'clock the abbé awaked me, saying, "Let us now set out, so that we may be able to say mass at an early hour." "Why, what is the matter with you?" said I, "you are like the Wandering Jew; you never can remain quiet; we have scarcely arrived, and yet you already wish to set out again." "No, my dear

fellow, you deceive yourself, you have slept at least three hours, it is now one o'clock in the morning ; we have still a journey of ten leagues to make before we reach Victoria, and as we are hungry and very ill-dressed, it is desirable that we should arrive before the usual hour of the services." I yielded to these reasons, and we were soon on our way; and after walking for two hours, we reached the wood which runs along the Coleto. This wood seems as though planted in sand, in which we sank knee-deep, which increased our fatigue extremely. Soon after we came in sight of the Coleto, whose width was alarming, and I feared that it was proportionately deep. As the abbé could swim he entered first, but the water scarcely covered his knees. The rivers of Texas deceive one much ; for in looking at a map, it would seem to be one of the best watered countries in the world, while it is on the contrary one of the driest. I found the water very cold, and my feet were cut by the shingles. With the first light of day, we entered the plain which borders Victoria ; the prairie birds, of low and heavy flight, were roused at our approach and uttered a strange cry : these were the only living things that we saw. We arrived at the forest of the Colorado at six in the morning, and met some American waggons, whose drivers seemed much astonished at seeing two Catholic priests at such an hour travelling on foot in these regions.

We crossed the Colorado in a boat, and were in a few minutes at the chapel of Victoria, where we celebrated mass. The parish priest was our countryman who had come to see us at Castroville, and accompanied me to Braunfels. We spent the day with him, and in the evening the abbé and I went to rejoin the Mexicans and our baggage on the plain of Lavaca.

On leaving Victoria we found three roads before us,

and were puzzled which to choose, for the wind blew with such violence that it swept away all traces of wheels; at all risks we followed one of these roads, and after an hour's journey we descended into a valley which was quite sheltered from the wind, and furrowed with numerous wheel-marks, but our waggons were not there. We concluded that we had mistaken our way, and cut across the fields in search of our fellow-travellers. Night falls, a fire blazes in the distance, we hasten towards it, and find our countryman and the Mexicans busily employed making a fricassee of some prairie fowls which they had just killed. It was our last night for sleeping on the plain, and this idea heightened our good humour. Pipes were lighted, conversation became animated, we wrapped our cloaks about us, looked up to the heavens, and sang in concert such as memory recalled of the hymns and melodies which had been familiar to us in childhood. At two o'clock in the morning we ceased singing, and rose to continue our journey; but what was our surprise on finding that we were surrounded by Americans, Irishmen, and Mexicans, who had drawn near to hear us sing; behind them we saw a regular troop of horses and oxen, forming a circle round us, having also no doubt been attracted by our singing. I then learned that we had encamped near a pool of water, where the drivers generally rested and watered their animals. About ten o'clock in the morning we reached another pool of water — dark, muddy, and infectious; it was called chocolate, doubtless on account of its colour. This was also a frequent place of encampment. We halted here, and made our coffee of the bad water, and were also obliged to sprinkle our cheese with it—a little piece of cheese being all that remained of our stock. I had seldom made a more un-

palatable meal, though jokes and puns were not wanting. Nevertheless we supped at Lavaca that evening, and sailed for Galveston on the following morning.

Our bishop would not consent to lose two missionaries at the same time; for he wanted priests now more than ever, several having died, and the cholera had just swept off another at Indian Point. He, however, gave one of us permission to return home, and the other a little time to rest and recruit his health. As I was the most seriously ill, the youngest and least necessary, and also because family affairs recalled me to Europe, and as I promised soon to return, the Abbé Dubuis consented to remain, and went to New Orleans to collect a little money with which to purchase a bell worthy of our new church. The worthy good bishop, who had only twenty-five piastres, gave me fifteen of them, with the addition of a bill of two hundred francs for my journey. Poor bishop! he himself had to make a journey into the interior of Texas, yet he deprived himself of necessaries in order to enable one of his priests to return and seek in his native land that health which he had lost on a foreign mission. I proceeded to New Orleans and received help from my brethren there; whence I went up the Mississippi as far as Cairo, whence I ascended the Ohio to Cincinnati, and crossed Lake Erie in company with 600 methodists of every age and sex. They were returning from a camp meeting, and continued their preaching and religious exercises on board the steamer. I visited the grand and beautiful falls of Niagara, to which justice has never been done by any painter—indeed it would be impossible to represent them faithfully. I set foot on the Canadian shore; and soon after I embarked at New York for England, where we arrived at Southampton after a passage of fourteen

days. I saw London for the first time, but feeling no desire to remain there, I re-embarked and hailed the shores of France the same evening. With what ecstacy I landed at Boulogne, and felt that my foot pressed once more my dear native land! I had to restrain myself or I would have embraced the gendarmes and custom-house officers, for they were the first Frenchmen that I met. I passed some hours with a family to whose care and kindness I had been recommended; and they received me in the most friendly way, loading me with delicate and thoughtful attentions. I was deeply moved at receiving unexpectedly such frank and cordial hospitality. France is the country where taste, politeness, and all the qualities of the heart, reach their culminating point. I wondered at hearing every one speak French, for my mother tongue had almost become a foreign language to my ears. I arrived at Lyons two days afterwards, and it was just ten o'clock in the evening when I knocked at my mother's door. How my heart beat! "Who is there?" "It is I." "It is my Emmanuel!" We fell into each other's arms and wept tears of joy—a mother's caresses are sweet at any age. I presented myself to my relations and friends the following day, but I was obliged to tell them my name, and to assure them of my identity before they could be persuaded to recognise in the hollow-cheeked, wrinkled, sun-burnt, wan and haggard being that stood before them, the young man who had been tolerably well-looking, hearty and strong, when he left them. My mother's heart alone recognised me.

END OF THE FIRST JOURNEY.

SECOND JOURNEY.

CHAPTER I.

A VISIT TO THE HOLY FATHER. — RETURN TO AMERICA. — A RATHER DIVERSIFIED VOYAGE. — DESCRIPTIONS OF AND IMPRESSIONS THEREUPON. — SERMONS ON BOARD. — AN IMAGINARY SHIPWRECK. — THE BRAZOS. — ISABELLA POINT. — BROWNSVILLE. — NEW MUNICIPAL STREET-CUTTING REGULATIONS. — OPINION OF MY PARISHIONERS ABOUT THE MISSIONARIES.

After a sojourn of three weeks at Lyons, I set out to see the Holy Father at Rome, to talk to him about my mission, and to present to him a pair of beautiful mocassins embroidered by our Indians. My entire worldly possession was a purse containing five francs, and the permission of the minister of marine to sail gratis in the government vessels. I reached Toulon on the 14th of October; and after traversing part of the South of France, sometimes a-foot, sometimes *en diligence*, as my means and necessity dictated, I embarked on the 15th, in the Veloce, with several infantry officers who accompanied a detachment of soldiers to Rome. The weather was fine, the sea calm, the voyage a charming one.

During the evening, by moonlight, I mixed among the soldiers, with whom I chatted a long time with no little amusement and cordial feeling. Arrived at Civita Vecchia I had the five francs in my pocket, but this was not quite enough to pay my way to Rome; and experience had already taught me that it is a far more diffi-

cult business to travel without money in a civilised than in a barbarian country. Still I did not lose heart at a trifle of this kind, but made up my mind to go to Rome on foot, by daily marches, like the soldiers.

In the eternal city, in vain I sought gratuitous hospitality. I put myself entirely into the hands of Providence for the payment of my expenses, and I asked an audience of the Holy Father, who at once acceded to my request.

I was very poorly clad, but at the Vatican a man is not judged by his dress. His Holiness received me with his accustomed benevolence. He would not have me kiss his toe, but gave me his hand. During my life I had never seen features so full of sympathy, so kind, or so venerable. Our conversation was a long one, and turned naturally on the missions, on the Indians in general, and on my own affairs in particular. I briefly told my adventures, and the Holy Father replied, "I see, dear child, that you are inured to misery."

"So much so," I replied, "that even in Rome it quits me not."

"How so?"

I then frankly avowed my pecuniary embarrassments, for my five francs had totally disappeared. His Holiness smiled, and seeing my confidence in God, said to me, "Since you travel on the business of Providence, His vicar shall pay your travelling expenses." And suiting the action to the word, His Holiness gave me a handful of gold. On my side I took out of my pocket the mocassins, which were folded in a morsel of torn paper, and presented them to the Holy Father, who examined the embroidery, and praised the ingenuity of the Indians. The noble simplicity and affecting bene-

volence of Pope Pius IX. are too well known for me to dwell on this *tête-à-tête*, the remembrance of which is still to me a sweet consolation.

On the 1st of November I left Italy for France, which I traversed in all directions. The revolution of February had alarmed men's minds, and shut up their purses, so that I had almost completely failed in my enterprise to put together some money for our poor and interesting mission of Texas. I was more successful, however, in my search for young priests ready to share our labours and trials; but the majority of them were poor, and their zeal ineffectual, as they could not pay their way to Texas. My health was still but very indifferent, my strength being very slow in returning; however, the distant lands, where I had run so many risks and supported so much fatigue, retained their attraction for my eyes. In the solitude of the new world I had contracted the habit of living constantly at danger's door; the grand scenes of nature, the deep emotions of the heart, had become for me wants of imperious necessity. Europe with its narrow prejudices, its niggard selfishness, and its dull bourgeoisie, appeared to me uninhabitable.

Every day I missed an illusion which made my heart at twenty-five buoyant with joy. Seeing the world at a nearer view and with more enlarged and less home-made ideas, I discovered in it every moment miseries and wounds, moral and physical, at which I recoiled. On the other hand the missions had no longer for me the charm of novelty which might at least counterpoise the bitterness of the trials to come. I knew how poignant sufferings and isolation are in these countries; and what strength and energy must be called

forth to keep one's self constantly united to God, and not to halt and stop short half way, fatigued and heart-fallen. Still I could not think of those poor colonists of Texas, with whom I had lived three years, whom I had directed by exhortations, enlightened and supported by the aids of religion, and to whom conscience whispered to me that I had been of service according to the measure of my strength,—I could not, I say, think of them without feeling a powerful desire to go and rejoin them at the earliest opportunity, in order to accomplish a task which I regarded as sacred. Hence I made up my mind to depart once more, and accordingly I left France on the 7th of March, 1851. My departure was a mournful one; the voyage was fated to prove a chapter of accidents.

I was on board the Franklin, which was about to make her first or second trip. We first called at Cowes, where we expected a visit from the Queen of England, who was anxious to see this beautiful vessel, and the next morning we were sailing on the "ocean wave." The wind whistled shrill and violent through the rigging; the waves, mountain high, buffeted us in such a manner that it was impossible either to sit or stand; and suddenly the storm gives way to a tempest. The billows break over the deck, and sweep clean away whatever they encounter; the masts crash; the paddles of the wheels are broken to pieces; the forecastle falls in. Every aperture on deck is carefully closed, yet we have fourteen feet of water in the hold! All along I continued to read in my overflooded cabin, while I heard above the din of the tempest, the oaths of the seamen, the cries, the prayers, or the wailings of the passengers. During the forty-eight hours that this tempest raged, I felt as if every moment would be my last.

On the seventh day of our voyage, the wind abated somewhat, and I ventured on deck. It was covered over with ice, and immense icicles of dazzling brilliance hung from the spars and the paddle-box. The carpenter of the *Franklin*, suspended over the deep by means of ropes, was repairing the damage. In the evening we observed huge icebergs floating as the currents bore them. On the banks of Newfoundland the sea was covered over with millions of sea-birds gracefully poising themselves on the waves; and at last we arrived at Hudson's Bay, which is truly magnificent. The heavens were serene, the sun genially warm, the sea calm and mirror-like, without a breeze to ripple its surface. At our ease we gazed in admiration on the enchanting shore of this bay, one of the most beautiful in the world, as it is ornamented with pretty little towns coquettish in their beauty, elegant and graceful country residences scattered over the green and blue rising grounds of Long Island and New Jersey.

Lake Erie being frozen over, I was obliged to make a stay of fifteen days at New York. I afterwards embarked in one of the monster steamers that ply on the Hudson as far as Albany. Thanks to a spirited sailing match we made this distance—about 156 miles—in a few hours, and for the trifling sum of one piastre. The two contending boats weighed anchor at the same moment, and set out in a spirit of proud rivalry. We sailed twenty-five, at times twenty-seven, miles an hour; and yet our captain, not quite satisfied with this speed, had casks of oil and grease thrown into the furnace. The fire seized the vessel twice. At forks of the river the rival boats endeavoured to cut clear a-head in order to shorten their way, and in this manœuvre they often became en-

tangled, with the danger of both going to the bottom, while there were from seven to eight hundred passengers on board. The contest was becoming quite a serious matter, and our lives were in jeopardy at once from smoke, fire and water. We hold a hurried meeting, discuss the crisis, and send a deputation to the captain, praying him to desist from this dangerous course. He replied with Jack-tar-American politeness:—

"You be d—d; for what you pay, you may as well all go to h—ll." At the same time he bawls out to the fireman, "Fire—fire, you there— more lard in the furnace." Our position had become truly fearful, when one of the passengers put an end to it by levelling a musket at the poor helmsman of our rival, and discharging its contents into his body. The poor fellow let go the wheel and dropped down frightfully wounded.

Arrived at Albany, I took the train to Buffalo, having run these 345 miles in twelve hours, but not without accident. The train that preceded us had got off the rails, and the way not being yet clear at the scene of the disaster, despite all the efforts of the engineer, we drove into a carriage on the line and had three of our company severely injured. At Buffalo, notwithstanding a violent gale that threatened a tempest on the lake, I embarked for Sandusky, where we arrived after a horrible passage of forty-eight hours and having twice struck on the sand-banks. All along the passengers held themselves ready, provided with a chair or some kind of life-buoy, expecting every moment to be hurled into the lake. From Sandusky to Cincinnati—a distance of 225 miles—I travelled by rail. Perhaps in the United States there is no other line more varied or picturesque in its scenery. When I was at Cincinnati,

the wife of the first colonist who cleared those charming undulating tracts was still to be seen there. It is certainly one of the handsomest cities of the United States, and the Germans have made it one of the richest. The vine produces there a very good quality of grape; and it is the only part of the United States where the tree is extensively cultivated.

We went down the Ohio in a magnificent steamer; and two days after our departure we came into collision with a vessel going up the river. She went down at once; but we succeeded in saving sixteen of her passengers. It was in April, and the weather was heavy, forcing one into a musing mood, with its chilling cheerless blasts murmuring as they came. I got on deck, and threw myself down before the pilot's cabin, preferring this icy solitude on deck to the stunning talk of the saloon, where the passengers blistered their tongues with eternal gossip about huge stoves that gave out more smoke than heat. By degrees I saw unfolding itself before me one of those panoramas of wild and primal beauty that has always for me a charm, new though melancholy.

Beautiful hillocks encircled with trees, and uniform in their proportions, lined the banks of the Ohio, forming a double range of vast and monotonous undulations, which, like monster embankments, confined the stream to a narrower bed and set bounds to its course. The yellowish waters of the river rolled along slowly, and wound round here and there into a thousand graceful forms. A scarcely perceptible down of early verdure graced the tops of the trees which nature had scattered over these hillocks in such profusion. You would have imagined them two armies of giants encamped in an antediluvian

valley. Here and there you observed, either on the Kentucky or the Ohio side, certain cleared spots, planted with the germs of some future American towns; you distinguished houses of wood or of brick, separate or in groups, on each side of one or more dirty streets, in which a multitude of hogs wallowed in the luxury of mire. The sight of these few houses, red or white as they were, resting on the river's bank and waiting for a destiny, for a future, made me sad. However, these embryos of cities, these miniature germs of cities in the distance of time, are mutually connected by a *cordon* of huts made of planks or blocks of trees, and present considerable interest from their very situation. In presence of these diversified pictures of nature and of man my imagination roved away in the regions of an undefined melancholy — for in America, as everywhere else, I found man blotting out the sublime poetic creations of primitive nature to make room for the prosy work of speculation, which, whatever may be its commercial usefulness, will be ever, for the intelligent traveller and tourist, a winding-sheet of ice thrown over those delicious thoughts that spring from the sublime scenes of solitary nature.

I remained several hours reclined, indulging in my reveries: when I thought of going below, the sun had already sunk behind the rising grounds; the branches of the trees and their slight tufts of verdure stood out in relief against the green-blue sky like summer clouds; the river grew broader, forming itself into a large lake, of a dark hue and gradually of a shapeless outline; a graceful island was espied in the middle of the river on the verge of the horizon; a light white vapour, resembling a scarf of delicate gauze, enveloped the distant island in its unsubstantial folds; and, as it rose above the trees, it reflected,

in a mysterious manner, the golden hues of the setting sun. This freak of nature had just added a new feeling to that chaos of diversified impressions which, for the last few hours, had brought into play all the poetic chords of my soul. Meanwhile it was piercingly cold, and while eye and imagination roamed abroad, my teeth chattered, and yet I felt not that I was chilled and frozen.

On entering the saloon I saw my fellow-travellers gathered round an Episcopalian bishop, who was developing a rather singular thesis: he was attempting to prove that as there is no water in the moon there can be no men there; for men cannot live without water. I would have asked him to prove that there was no water in the moon, but I feared my demand would be deemed out of place by the preacher—I say *preacher*, for his eloquence took quite the shape of a sermon. After him two Presbyterian ministers preached on the inferiority of the Indian races to the whites, and on the impossibility of bringing the former within the pale of civilisation. These two had resided in one of the American forts on the Red River, and had seized the opportunity of preaching to some of the Indians who came to demand payment for their ceded territory. It is well known that the American Government has driven some of the Indian tribes from their lands allowing them, in consideration, some wretched annual pittance. This brace of ministers told us that the Indians were brutalised by their indulgence in alcoholic drinks, and that the gospel had no salutary influence on their lives.

In proof of their assertion they related that they themselves were witnesses to some payments made them by the American Government, for which these naked savages, instead of buying clothes, procured umbrellas, hats, and

eau-de-vie. When a Protestant minister is on board a steamer he rarely escapes being asked to preach, no matter what about. These casual sermons no doubt entertain the passengers, but they are devoid at once of solid interest and moral effect.

According as we were making progress down the river we were passing, too, apace from winter to spring-time; the trees were putting on their mantle of green and the shrubs bedecking themselves with flowers; the light downy tufts, scarcely presenting a shade of verdure on the Ohio banks, were changed along the Mississippi into a dense and fragrant foliage, while the temperature increased in proportion. Opposite Wicksburg about thirty trusses of hay, left by negligence near the furnace of the steamer, took fire; and to escape being roasted alive in the midst of water, we all ran to the pumps, and eventually mastered the flames.

Arrived at Louisiana I felt as if borne again to the burning life of the tropics; the poplars, the sycamores, the wild vine, the different plants were in all the pomp of vernal beauty, while the air was fragrant with the rich perfume of flower and forest, and yet it was only the month of April. At last, we arrived at New Orleans, but not having wherewithal to go to Texas, I returned to Lafourche, to collect among my friends. The kind Archbishop of New Orleans added so much to my store, that on the 5th of May I resumed my journey, and two days after, favoured by excellent weather, I arrived at Galveston. The Bishop of Galveston exchanged my mission at Castroville for a new one on the western frontiers of Texas, which are bounded by the Rio del Norte, commonly called the Rio Grande, which has its source at the base of the Sierra-Verde, and empties itself into the

Gulf of Mexico. This new destination put me about a good deal; for it not only separated me from my sterling friend and colleague the Abbé Dubuis, but it also shut me out completely from my old acquaintances. I did not relish solitude very much; for in these countries, more barbarian than civilised, it presented dangers and *ennuis* which, without the special aids of grace, the most iron will could not support. I pleaded my ignorance of Spanish, which is the language of the mass of the Catholics of these portions of the country; but I had to yield to the pious urgency of the venerable prelate, who promised to send me a co-operator at his earliest opportunity; and on the 4th of May I embarked in the teeth of a frightful tempest, which was nearly making short work of us all an hour after our departure. I confess that, being too well aware of the rickety state of our craft, the tempest had no great charms for me, especially as I had had already no small experience of its nature and workings. Hence the hoarse raging of the waves was to me quite monotonous.

On the first night we witnessed a scene, the burlesque of which can be more easily conceived than expressed. The steward of the steamer had fallen asleep on a sofa in the cabin, while a servant, having no bed to lie on stretched himself near the sofa, and was soon wrapped in a profound sleep. The storm that still continued to rage exercised, no doubt, a certain influence on the steward's dreams; for he dreamt that the craft was shattered by the tempest, and that he was cast among the waves, having no hope but in a plank which he spied just before his eyes, and which he seized and held to with all his might. At this moment a huge wave struck the boat a-starboard and flung us all clean out of our berths. The steward,

without awaking, fell plump on the servant, and imagining him the safety plank of his dream, grasped him by the neck, crying out at the same time, "Oh! thank God, I have hold of it—it shall not slip from me."

The servant, startled out of his sleep by this fearful gripe, cried out "Help! assassin!" Attracted by the cries of both combatants, we moved at once to the rescue of the assailed, but we left out of our calculations the heaving of the boat, which sent most of us bang down upon both the steward and the servant. To complete the confusion, in rushes a lady in a strange and disordered costume, all in tears, and alarmed out of her wits by the pelting storm. She flung herself at the feet of the steward, crying out, "Captain, Captain, save me—land me somewhere and I'll give you ten thousand piastres."

The steward, now quite restored to consciousness, laughed in his peculiar way, and observing the lady, briskly answered, "I'm not the captain; and as for the matter of that, why for all the gold in the world we could not put you ashore, for we are a good way off from land."

At last we arrived at Brazos Santiago. A stranger, unacquainted with the extension accorded to the word *town* in the United States, would be at a loss for a trace of one in a few wretched huts scattered along the shore. I think I have already observed that the coast of Texas is girt around, almost in its entire extent, by a string of various sandy islands, of very unequal length. The spaces between them are called bars, and the bays formed by them with the mainland are so shallow that vessels cannot land their passengers or cargoes except in boats and flat-bottomed craft. Brazos is

situated at the eastern extremity of one of these islands, and only four miles from the mouth of the Rio Grande. Besides the few huts already referred to, there are some large wooden structures, got up at the time of the Mexican war, as dépôts of the American army. These edifices are now abandoned ruins. In summer the heat is suffocating; the absence of trees or verdure, and the reflection of the sun's scorching heat from the sands, would make the place uninhabitable were there not a sea breeze morning and evening to temper the burning heat of the atmosphere.

A boat conveyed us from Brazos to Point Isabella, the nearest inland town in this quarter, and the entrepôt of goods coming from the United States, and destined for the frontiers of Texas and the interior of Mexico. It is just a similar place to Brazos, slovenly, sorry, and chiefly inhabited by Mexicans, whose huts are pitched without taste or order on the strand. You never fail to meet there a number of *arrieros*, or Mexican car drivers, whose huge vehicles drawn by oxen are waiting for goods to be conveyed to Brownsville. The region about Point Isabella has an elevation of some yards above the level of the bay, and forms an amphitheatre of sand and yellowish earth, which feeds at intervals a few tufts of grass and stunted brushwood, the prey of the scorching sun. Along the horizon the eye is relieved by no variety; all is a parched desert.

The passengers were provided with two vehicles drawn by four horses. Once seated we were off at a gallop. My next neighbour was the director of the bank at Brownsville, a native Mexican, by name Couthway. He was also a bit of a naturalist, a man of no common intelligence, as well as of distinguished mien and

manners, such, that I formed for him a sincere attachment during our passage from Galveston to Brazos. Though a zealous Episcopalian, and aware of my character as a Catholic missionary, he on his side formed for me a friendship proof against the changes of time and place. By his warm introductions he procured me a gratifying reception in the easy society of the frontiers; he spoke to all his friends and acquaintances of what he was pleased to call the liberality of my character, which was nothing more than common Christian charity, and the simple practice of the spirit of the gospel. Thus, let me confess it, this worthy friend smoothed down afterwards not a few difficulties that lay in my path, in securing for me the confidence and esteem of the bulk of the people with whom it was my destiny to be in daily contact.

The route from Isabella Point to Brownsville lies for some distance along the bay; then turning to the left it enters a vast marshy plain, indented with natural salt-pits, and often presenting the phenomenon of the mirage. This plain at its north-western extremity joins that of Palo-Alto, in which was fought the first battle between the Americans under General Taylor and the Mexicans commanded by General Arista. The success attending this first campaign of the Americans, which was of two years' duration, was owing, in a great measure, to their superior artillery. The high road runs through the middle of the battle field.

Leaving behind us the plain of Palo-Alto, we entered a thick-set brushwood, formerly frequented by the Indians, who butchered there a whole Irish family, the ruins of whose dwelling are still visible to the left of the road. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century this part of Texas was called Costa-Deserta by Spanish historians.

The Indians themselves never seemed to take to it much. We next passed by the Resaca De La Palma, equally remarkable for a bloody encounter, of which it was the scene on the day following that of Palo-Alto. The Mexicans give the name of Resaca to a dried-up bed of a river, and of such there is no small number along the bank of the Rio Grande. At last we arrived at Brownsville, my future place of residence.

During the war of intervention the American Colonel Brown constructed a fort in front of Matamocas, a Mexican town, where he fell, and lies in the fort which bears his name.

Around this dreaded tomb some French and American merchants settled down, as well as a number of Mexican families, and thus Brownsville was founded. At my arrival the town had been standing four years, and already did it reckon about five or six thousand in population, chiefly Mexicans.

The site of Brownsville is most favourable for transit commerce; situated on the extreme limits of Texas, it despatches goods to all the Mexican towns, north and east. It is situated in ninety-eight degrees (Greenwich) west longitude, and twenty-eight north latitude, about thirty-five miles from the Gulf of Mexico. The yellowish sandy waters of the Rio Grande wash, in their course, the gardens of the town and its amphitheatre-shaped quay. The soil consists of fine white sand, which, in north winds, rises in whirls so thick as to darken the atmosphere, and render all intercourse in the streets impossible. As a set-off the rain, which in these quarters falls suddenly in immense torrents, makes rivers of the streets, which foot-passengers, horses and cattle wade through without faltering. The vicinity is

fertile and the vegetation of tropical luxuriance. You meet with neither birch nor fir-tree, even the oak is rare, but in every direction rise the date tree, the fan-branch palm tree, the ebony, the aloe, the Cocus Mauritia, the colossal fern, the cactus of every denomination. The woods abound with wild vines and odoriferous plants, countless flowers of countless brilliant colours, forms, and enchanting perfumes, and over this rich fecundity of earth expands a sky without speck, a sun cloudless and glorious.

The church of Brownsville rose opposite Brown's fort, in the midst of a wild, uncultivated, unenclosed country. It was of wood, and could accommodate about three hundred people. The belfry was not unlike a cage surmounted by a cross. I contrived, after a time, to cover the shapelessness of the walls and all the inside with certain paintings on cotton. The presbytery formed part of the building, which consisted of a square structure of four chambers, one being the sacristy; but there was not even a particle of furniture in it; and hence the first night I was happy to sleep on the boards. Next day a young officer of the garrison gave me a settee bed, bed linen, blankets and a few chairs, offering me also his table and his purse. I really had need of these kind offers, being almost penniless at the time, and I therefore gratefully accepted them. Without them I hardly know how I could have settled down in my destitution. This good officer's name was M. Garresché, a Frenchman by birth, and an excellent Catholic.

The aspect of the city is pleasing enough. The greater part of the houses are made of brick, but well-shaped and surrounded with gardens. Along the thoroughfares it is protected by façades, which are half hidden

from view by Chinese lilac, willows and acacias, which give at once shade and perfume to the houses. The streets are wide, and at right angles, though they were not so at all times. In the beginning, each colonist and merchant fixed his hut wherever he liked. As the town developed itself, the necessity of a municipal organisation became manifest, and its action was inaugurated by an ordinance relative to the proper direction of the streets. The sheriff, who was quite a practical man, though a downright brute and knew no compromise, — of whom by-and-bye — was charged with the execution of the decree. He proclaimed that within the space of eight days every house should be on the line drawn by the surveyor-general, and that all those that were not promptly changed must be taken down forthwith. All knew what kind of man the sheriff was, and that his menace was no vain parade; hence during the week all the houses were one great wreck, some receding, others projecting, as the sheriff's tape directed.

The ground was sandy and irregular, so that every moment houses going in opposite directions came into collision. Thus obstructed in their course several encountered on the same point, and the general circulation being thus obstructed, and the sheriff being no joker when things were not up to time, angry cries, disputes, and serious encounters became the unhappy consequence. Nearly all the wooden houses were in line on the appointed day; but as to the reed and branch huts, there they had to stand, the prey of about twenty merciless hatchets, under the orders of the sheriff.

My new mission was of large extent. All around Brownsville swept by a radius of 60 miles, the popula-

tion was very dense, and for about three hundred miles northward numerous towns succeeded each other on the banks of the Rio Grande, as well as several establishments which it was my duty to visit. I was not obliged to diverge much from the river, but for a long way I had to ascend its course. Unlike my former mission its Catholic population did not consist chiefly of Germans and Alsacians. Mexicans were my principal charge, they forming the mass of the population, while the territory had been lately annexed to the United States.

In my first mission the vices that Abbé Dubuis and myself had chiefly to encounter were avarice, roguery, and drunkenness. In the second, I stood single-handed against ignorance, superstition, indifference and immorality. True, indigence was no longer my inseparable associate, but the vices and the incurable indifference of my flock were enough to break my heart. Besides I was completely ignorant of Spanish, which was indispensable to my success.

Notwithstanding this latter inconvenience I set about my reconnoitring visits the day after my arrival, and my reception was, throughout, warm and cordial. The truth is, the arrival of a priest is quite an event in these quarters; and let me add, Mr. Couthway's good offices had their full share in procuring for me this hearty reception. Catholics, Protestants and Jews, all alike bade me a kindly welcome, and offered their best services. By these friendly demonstrations I did not allow myself to be blinded to the fact that such are for the most part of a personal nature, and go as easily as they come, the moment the man gives way to the priest. Nevertheless I accepted these marks of kindly interest

with satisfaction, and promised to avail myself of them when occasion required.

The great bulk of my parishioners had no idea of the devotedness of the missionaries, or of the great motive power that impels them on. It is true that with men who only value and seek out here below the possession of money, as a means of procuring the mere animal enjoyments of life, the heart and soul are closed to those moral and intellectual sentiments so full of secret, mysterious joy. The apostolic life, with all its sacrifices, sufferings and devotedness, is a book shut up from them; and thus they could not realise how I had a second time travelled over a space of nine thousand miles, exposed to every peril and fatigue, for the sole purpose of improving their lives, and instructing them in their religious duties.

So much trouble, they thought, was poorly repaid in the object. Many among them who, for reasons I know not, at once displayed a sympathy for me, and with a certain interest would inquire: "But what have you done to be sent here?"

"No one has sent me; I have come of my own accord."

"What! you have not been obliged to quit France for some grave reasons?"

"For no reason in life, except to instruct you. If a priest acts wrong, the church strips him of the power to exercise his ecclesiastical functions, but she sends him nowhere."

"Then you have come here as soldiers go to war, for advancement, and to become a bishop?"

"It is the last of my thoughts. The episcopate is too heavy a load, and too dangerous a charge to be the object of my ambition, and good priests never seek or desire it."

Then, as did the disciples of Jesus Christ, they shook their heads as a mark of incredulity, and thought within them, " This language is hard to be understood."

By means of those visits I obtained valuable information respecting the country and its inhabitants, and was soon settled down in the business of my mission ; but, alas ! affairs were far from presenting the colour of the rose. I frankly avow that I felt alarm at the task before me. How much labour would it cost me to implant in these souls, I do not say the very elements of religion, but even a sense of order, reason and morality ! Still I was aware of how gentle, gracious, and open to persuasion, were the Mexican people, and I entered on my task with courage, knowing that heaven would not fail to send its powerful aids, and that even in the event of failure, the Master whom I served would take into good account my efforts and my labour.

CHAP. II.

THE BARILLEROS. — THE BAR-ROOM. — FERVOUR OF BROWNSVILLE PEOPLE. — STATE OF AMERICAN SOCIETY IN GENERAL, AND OF TEXIAN IN PARTICULAR. — APPLICATION OF LYNCH-LAW. — EXECUTION. — MORALITY OF THE CIVIC AUTHORITIES. — THE SHERIFF. — TWO BLOODHOUNDS AS KEEPERS OF THE PRISON. — THE FREEMASONS, AND THE BURIAL OF AN IRISHMAN. — THE MAGISTRACY IN THE NEW STATES OF THE UNION. — PARTIALITY OF THE JUDGES. — LAW PROCEEDINGS. — ELECTIONS. — A FASHIONABLE DOCTOR.

In paying my visits I was struck with the animation of Brownsville. I was made to understand that this was due to a number of Rancheros, or frontier farmers, who came in every day, either on horseback or in carts, to buy provisions and make other purchases for themselves, their families, and their friends. The streets were sadly cut up by the constant tread of horsemen, richly mounted indeed; by the *Arrieros*, who loaded and unloaded their goods; by the *Barilleros*, called elsewhere *aguaderos*, or water-carriers. These poor fellows dress almost like the Lazzaroni of Naples. A shirt open in front and exposing the chest, with the sleeves tucked up to the shoulders, cotton drawers turned up above the knees, and sometimes a hat made of palm branches, make up the entire wardrobe of the Barilleros. It is they who furnish the inhabitants with water, bringing it from the Rio Grande in casks having two axles attached to their ends. To these axles is fitted a cord, by which the Barilleros draw the casks like rollers

without much fatigue or inconvenience, to escape which the Mexican seldom fails in ingenuity.

I likewise remarked a great number of people drunk, sprawling asleep in the sun before the grog-shops where they get intoxicated. These taverns, called *bar-rooms*, are often the theatre of scenes that disgrace human nature. On one occasion, an Irishman of a respectable family fell foul of an American merchant naturally of a quarrelsome temper. The friends on both sides decided that recourse to arms could alone make amends for the offence. A duel was at once decided upon, and took place in the very tavern. The Irishman got a pistol not charged, and of course fell. Such is their notion of fair play in America.

The greater number of those I saw drunk were Mexicans who are not much accustomed to spirituous drinks, and Americans belonging to the temperance societies. These societies, though numerous in the States, are far from reducing the number of drunkards; for though their members promise to abstain from wine, they nevertheless indulge in other fermented liquors.

The news of my arrival soon spread among the ranchos around Brownsville; and reckoning upon a large auditory on the following Sunday, I got my letter of appointment translated into Spanish, adding a few words of invitation to my parishioners to come and see me, that I might thus the sooner learn the spiritual wants of their different localities. In reality the church was crowded with Mexicans, Europeans, and Americans, of every shade of religion. The reading of my letter gave them satisfaction, and from that day forth I had numerous visits. During the week, M. and Madame Garresché were the only ones who visited the church.

The fervour of the Catholics did not go quite so far; but I rang the mass bell, said it, and served it for the most part alone. To try how far religious ceremonies might attract the people, I organised, in a hurried way, a kind of choir, and endeavoured to celebrate the month of May with the ceremonies usual in France. May being nearly ended, my success was very poor; for out of a population containing about ten or twelve thousand, in the neighbourhood of Brownsville, only twenty-five celebrated the communion.

At Brownsville, as well as along all the frontiers of Texas, and I may say the entire extent of this vast State, and in all the new States of the Union, the population presents the oddest and most heterogeneous medley to be met with in the United States. American society almost defies analysis or description,—so changeful are its features, so diversified its character. Hence it is little known. Novelists and historians have sketched it, but always insufficiently; for to present a perfect likeness of a society so unstable and diversified would be quite impossible. For a certain time in the same locality the picture might hold; change time and place, and it ceases to be a likeness.

Not to speak of the vast regions themselves, at every point so different in aspect, in climate, in productions, in interest, and in internal government, crowds of European emigrants scatter themselves every year all over the Union, already a confused mixture of all nations — Spaniards, Anglo-Saxons, French, Mexicans. The Americans, strictly so called, are so unlike each other in their education, tastes, and ideas, that you would never take them for the same people; so that, to comprehend these singular anomalies,

you must bear in mind the constitution of these colonies before the era of their independence. On one side individuals remarkable for their acquirements, intelligence, and upright character, who would shine in the brightest European circles, are met with; others so depraved that our very galleys could hardly supply their equals in crime, or criminal history, monsters more hideous. Between these extremes, there are to be met with qualities and vices which supply the pen of the historian with curious details, and develope themselves by public and singular acts, not alone in the grand political party questions, but in the minor and local ones of general and civic administration.

The Americans of the Texian frontiers are, for the most part, the very scum of society — bankrupts, escaped criminals, old volunteers, who after the treaty of Guadulupe Hidalgo, came into a country protected by nothing that could be called a judicial authority, to seek adventure and illicit gains. The great towns of the Union have some kind of police, but along the frontiers of the new States the law has little sway. It is evaded or resisted, and there is no armed force to make it respected.

Before the municipal organisation of Brownsville, Lynch-law was in full force. The inhabitants were obliged to have recourse to this extremity as the only means of providing for their own safety. The judgments of the people, no doubt, had the merit of impartiality in the punishment of the guilty; but they had the one great fault of precipitation, a man being hung for inflicting a wound, without any inquiry whether the wound was serious or otherwise.

One evening, during a fandango, an American who

was half drunk, quarrelled with a Mexican, drew him out of the dance, and stabbed him in the abdomen. The Mexican cried murder, and, besmeared with blood, crawled as far as the ball-room door. At sight of this unfortunate sufferer, the dancers set off in pursuit of the American, who had run towards the Rio Grande in the hope of escaping by swimming across it. But he was too late. He was arrested as he was on the point of flinging himself into the river, and, well handcuffed, he was confined in a wooden hut, under strict vigilance during the night. Next morning, the people were summoned with sound of trumpet to pronounce sentence. One man (the future sheriff) stepped aside a little, and without judicial charge or display of oratory shouted, "Let those who vote for his death step this way. Let the rest remain as they are." This laconic, savage address was received with a stunning hurrah! and the prisoner was condemned to death! The crowd proceeded at once to the prisoner, whom they placed on a cart, and the crowd moved on to the shambles, no gallows as yet being erected. This place, infected with the blood and remains of slaughtered animals, was a small space, without roof or shade, roasted by the sun, and the resort of dogs which fought for the bones of the animals. It was situated near the church. The cart stopped beneath the posts that were used to hang up the slaughtered oxen. The future sheriff seized the cord, and set about making the fatal noose; but it would seem that he was doing the thing unhandily, for the culprit, whose hands were now set free, said to him, "Let me do it. You don't know your business." And seizing the rope, he tied the knot, and put it round his own neck. Having done so, he thus addressed the crowd:

"Good sirs, listen to wholesome advice. If you wish never to have the rope about your necks, don't get drunk. It is drunkenness that has put me into this cart. Now I have a last favour to ask of you. Do not put my name in the papers, that my mother may remain as long as possible ignorant of her son's fate." After these few words, which made a deep impression on the crowd, he cried to the horses to move on, and in an instant his body hung from the posts, where it remained suspended in mid-air for a few minutes; and the Mexican who had been stabbed, died early on the following day.

Subsequently these executions, which had become of very frequent occurrence, assumed a more solemn character—a minister of religion being present to assist the criminal. Still barbarism did not divest itself of all its rights. One day I witnessed the execution of three at the same time, two Mexicans and an American. The latter in a mock-fight had fired his revolver at his adversary, while some one behind him attempted to seize his arm, but the trigger was pulled, and the ball struck one of the assistants. The day of the execution the friends of the American, to soothe the pain of his last moments, made the unfortunate man drunk, and he walked to the scaffold staggering, humming a ditty, with a cigar in his mouth, and accompanied by a Presbyterian minister, a Catholic priest assisting the Mexicans. The ropes being arranged and the criminals placed on the fatal board, the Catholic priest knelt down and begged the crowd to pray for those who were about to suffer. The prayer over, the Presbyterian minister made a long discourse, during which the criminals had to wait in suspense before being launched into eternity. I could never endure those

horrid tortures of soul, and always contented myself with accompanying the criminals to the place of execution, exhorting them on the way with all my strength to die like true Christians.

In Europe these judicial procedures of Mexico will, no doubt, be judged with severity; nevertheless, the habits of the people are so very different from ours, that what we judge harsh and cruel, they often regard as perfectly humane. What shocks our usages, our reason, and sentiments, seems sometimes, in the solitudes of the new world, not only quite natural but indispensable; for the requirements of these solitudes are in proportion to their civilisation.

On the frontiers of Texas, where human life is little valued, the inhabitants have little personal protection except in their arms. Hence they always go armed. To put down those evil-doers who would not submit to the regular organisation of justice, the inhabitants did not hesitate to entrust the execution of this expeditious code to officers of the halter, whose antecedents were of a nature to strike terror into the most intractable. But were those that deserved it most brought to the gibbet, the very functionaries would be the first, and they would be followed by a goodly number of judges, barristers, and doctors, headed by the sheriff himself.

This was a man of immense stature and of Herculean proportions. His expressionless features bore the impress of cruelty. He carried at his waist a six-barrel revolver, and in his hand a cow-hide lash, making frequent use of both. Whenever he went in pursuit of any malefactor it was not certain that he would bring back his prey; but it was improbable that the prey would ever return out of his company. One day that

he gave chase to a robber, the plundered dealer inquired on his return if he had found his man.

"Yes," the sheriff coolly answered; "I could not fetch him back, but it is all the same—he'll steal no more."

Soon afterwards the robber's body was discovered in a chaparal with a ball in his heart, and half covered with shrubs and moss. Honest folks could not find a more energetic officer of justice. As we have seen, the sheriff made no secret of his exploits, which were notorious, and every succeeding week revealed new feats of this kind, which, true or false, served to increase his reputation and render him more terrible to the evil-doers.

The prison of Brownsville was a small plank cabin, erected opposite the church, and surrounded by a hedge of briars. Though all the prisoners were chained down, many broke their bonds, and escapes were of no rare occurrence. To diminish their frequency the sheriff intrusted the prison-gate to the keeping of two blood-hounds of the bull-dog breed, of proverbial ferocity, such as chase the negroes, and were employed by the Americans against the Indians and in the war of Florida.

Several times as I was returning from attendance on the sick, and passing in front of the prison, these dogs would bound over the hedge in pursuit of me, and I owed my escapes to my fleetness alone. I went to wait on the sheriff to inform him of the constant danger I ran from his dogs, and I begged him to have them chained at night, or at least to prevent them from getting into the streets. He laughed heartily at my complaint. Then I observed—

"My dear Sheriff, I will run no more risks; when next your dogs attack me, I will kill them. When

my path is crossed by a tarantula or a serpent which attempts to bite me, I make no scruple of crushing it at once. You are therefore warned."—"Eh! eh! indeed."

And he retired with a somewhat incredulous and defiant air. The opportunity to prove that I spoke quite seriously was not slow in coming. A few days after, I was called at about eleven o'clock at night to the bedside of a dying man. I went with my pistol, as usual, in my pocket, and my life-preserver (*assommoir*) in my hand, prepared for any contingency. Passing close to the prison I saw the dogs clearing over the shrubbery hedge, and making towards me; but I was quite resolved to make short work of it with them, and splendid moonlight enabled me to take aim. In two seconds, I broke the skull of one and the jawbone of the other, which slunk away yelling horribly. Now at rest as to the consequences of my nocturnal journeys, I proceeded to visit the dying man, satisfied that on my return I no longer ran the risk of being torn to pieces. Next day the sheriff came to my house, in a great fury, with the whip in his hand, perhaps resolved to make goodly use of it. But I watched him closely, for I expected the visit.

"It was you killed my dogs," he said.

"Yes," I coolly replied; "you had your warning, which you disregarded—you only laughed at it; and, as the proverb says, 'I would rather kill the d—l than be killed by him.'"

His rage now knew no bounds. He raised his whip to belabour me, but instantly snatching my pistol from my pocket, I put the muzzle of it to his breast, and coolly said, "Sheriff, I am no Mexican; and if you value your life treat me as a gentleman."

My determination had its full effect. He became pale as death, his lash fell from his hand, his anger ceased, and he made an attempt to smile.

"Come, Sheriff," I observed, "give me your hand; let us be friends."—"With all my heart!" he replied, and with that he gave me a vigorous shake of the hands. "Ah! you are a man—I am quite pleased with you. Should any one fail to treat you with due respect, he shall have to do with me, rest assured of that. 'Sdeath, *diable*, man!" he then exclaimed, with a rather comical and half-serious air, "you are more determined than I thought. Before picking a quarrel with you, a man should take his measures of precaution." "Ah! my dear sir," I replied in the same tone, "your courage, *entre nous*, is mighty great before cowards; but as you value your personal safety, do not rank me in that category, as, when there is question of my honour and of my rights as citizen and minister of religion, be assured of it I shall never be intimidated by any man; and to be treated with true respect I shall ever have a firm hand and an unblenching eye."

The sheriff kept his word; and from this day forward he showed himself a stanch friend to me.

The Americans, in order to have strangers bow to their good pleasure, do not hesitate to have recourse to violence. But they yield with as much readiness the moment that their menaces, impotent to frighten, are met with energy of language and attitude.

Let me illustrate this by another personal example. An old Irishman, who lived in the United States with his only daughter, came to Texas to dispose of some land that belonged to him on the banks of the Rio Grande. Having realised two or three thousand dollars by the sale,

he was preparing to return to the United States when he fell ill at Brownsville, and died in the course of a few days. Before his death, one of his nephews apprised me of his illness and begged of me to visit him. I instantly complied. The dying man was a Freemason, but, anxious to receive the consolations of religion, he renounced his Freemasonry before two witnesses, and received the last sacraments. The nephew observing that the pretended friends of his uncle were not quitting his bedside — the money was in the Irishman's trunk — remained near the corpse. But under pretence that he gave himself up to drink he was thrown into prison and loaded with irons. The same day four of the principal personages of the town and the heads of the Masonic Lodge came to me and said, the deceased having been a Catholic, they were anxious that I should perform the burial service with all due pomp, considering his wealth, and that the entire Lodge, with its *insignia*, would assist at the ceremony. Having no wish to discuss a question of profane interest that nowise concerned me, I replied that I was ready to impart all due solemnity to the service under the circumstances, but that I could not admit the Lodge into my church, if they bore the emblems of a society condemned by the Canons of the Church. I added, too, that this demonstration of the Lodge was neither consistent nor becoming, as the deceased had renounced Freemasonry in the presence of witnesses. But those gentlemen answered that they were the only competent judges of what was becoming in this business, and that, freely or by force, they would have the burial according to their belief. Seeing the conversation assumed the form of menace, I replied in a similar tone.

"You are aware, gentlemen, from the history of

the sheriff and his dogs, that I will not be bullied; I am master in my own house; the church is my domain, and not public property; no one can enter it against my will; in matters of right and duty, I shall never yield, especially to force; and take my word for it, that no Freemason with his emblems shall enter into the church: he or I shall fall in the attempt. I know the ways of the country too well to be ignorant, that the day I should waver in the discharge of my duty would be only the first of a series of insults and outrages to myself; and I respect my coat too much to dishonour it by mean or cowardly conduct."

"But what is to be done then?" they replied, in a milder tone. — "Listen to me. I only see two means of accomplishing your wishes in accordance with ecclesiastical discipline; and rest assured that I do not act from caprice, but from a sense of duty. Were I to yield to your demands, I might possibly secure your friendship. In any case, I would have the remuneration attendant on this ceremony, while, in refusing, I make for myself enemies of the most influential persons of the town, and deprive myself of a pecuniary aid which would not come amiss. Now, then, let this be your course. Come to the church without the badges of your society, and I shall allow you in; for I am not bound to inquire into personal character before admission into the temple. Satan himself might come, were he so minded, as I am not obliged to know his features in order to keep him out. Should this expedient not meet with your approval, you can go in procession in due time from the corpse-house to the cemetery, where I shall be present also to bless the

grave. Thus I shall have satisfied my conscience, and the deceased will not be deprived of the prayers of the Church." This last expedient was adopted as the most conciliatory, and we parted friends as before.

In the United States, as in Europe, every man is at liberty to choose what profession he will; but examinations, diplomas, and certificates of capability are things unknown there. Each one can at any moment abandon commerce to become judge, physician, barrister, statesman, or even minister of religion. If his new profession is not lucrative enough, or fails in its charms, he abandons it for another; and sometimes he is engaged in several at the same time, especially in the new States of the Union. The consequence is that the judges, barristers, physicians, representatives, and ministers of religion, are for the most part incredibly ignorant. When they enter on their functions they study, as they can, some easy elementary work on their duties, and then imagine themselves thoroughly instructed, an illusion far more dangerous than simple ignorance. Thus, those who have to place themselves in such hands for any business whatever, do so only at their imminent peril.

The magistracy is far from giving adequate guarantees for the security of the public; and in criminal matters it is barefaced as it is revolting. Let the criminal be an American, and though he were the worst ruffian in the town he is let off scot-free, with a mere promise to pay a sum of money, which of course he never pays. Should the crime be of too glaring a nature to escape punishment, the perpetrator, be he robber or murderer, gets off with imprisonment, a mockery in its duration;

and he is often enabled to evade all punishment by leaving the town which has been the theatre of his crime. This shameless partiality of the American judges is the best justification of Lynch-law. And hence this Draconian code is in full force in all the new States of the Union. As to Germans, Irish, and Mexicans, the civil law is enforced in their cases with all its rigour. Even frequently, where the crime remained to be proved, they would in the first instance be thrown into prison in irons, there to await their sentence, or rather their condemnation, in which the sentence most generally is terminated.

Towards the Irish and Mexicans excessive rigour used to be employed, savouring glaringly of bigotry and religious hate, which required no stimulus in a sentiment of cowardly cruelty towards the weak, by whom retaliation was impossible. I saw at Brownsville Mexicans whom the sheriff was flogging to death with his ox-hide lash. They were bound, half-naked, their arms extended across the prison door, and then scourged on the sides and loins with the most brutal violence. To save the expense of their support, pending sentence, they were not sent to prison, but were sent back untried, having their frames lacerated with stripes. Some died from the effects of these barbarities.

I could never comprehend the Mexican's submission, supporting, as he did, at once the cruelty and the contempt of a nation which he sovereignly detested, had I not been so often the witness of his incredible *nonchalance* and imperturbable meekness. In these badly-organised regions, the Mexican might have an easy vengeance on his persecutors, who are quite the minority on the Texian frontiers; but vengeance is not in his heart; he would

rather forget an injury than take the trouble of avenging it.

Still there is no lack of courts of justice. Some are stationary and periodical in their sessions; others are itinerant, and courts of appeal. Every village, yclept town, has its magistrates for civil and criminal cases. Over them is a more important tribunal, which despatches annually a Judge of Appeal to the principal places of the country of Texas. The man that came to Brownsville was a large handsome Yankee, neither over unpolite nor unreasonable. He even decided equitably enough in the rare moments of his sobriety. I met him one day, in a tavern, surrounded by Americans, who were bidding him welcome, glass in hand, and I heard him propose the following toast in a thick voice:—"To justice modified by circumstances." The maudlin auditors hailed the words with raptures of applause. After this successful feat he went, as best he could, to dispense "justice modified by circumstances."

From judges of this stamp, people can hardly expect "*Just Justice*," and hence they dispense it for themselves. When drunkenness is the only defect of a judge, you may hope, according to the adage "*In vino veritas*," that out of many sentences, some few may be fair, and yours among the number. But when to drunkenness is added ignorance of the law, of the nature of a contract, of the general rules on which property and society itself rest secure; and when to drunkenness and this ignorance too, is further added venality, fear of the strong hand, and party feeling, then it is only a Mexican, a simpleton, or a coward, that would appeal to law for justice. The Americans, and the Europeans who know how things stand in these still savage regions, dispense with magis-

trates; and the dispensers of justice never interfere in the disputes of such people, knowing well the consequence of their intermeddling.

Property questions were in Brownsville, as in the greater part of Texas, the prolific source of quarrels and litigation. In Texas, and especially towards the frontiers, when you wish to acquire a territory, the simplest and shortest method is to select one at will near some river or water-course, and then to install yourself without further formality. You can take chance for the right of prescription afterwards. The greater part of the Kentucky Americans, and of those of the Eastern parts who have established themselves in Texas, are proprietors by no other right. If need be, the pistol, the carbine, and the bowie-knife establish the right.

The title of first occupier has an irresistible value in these countries. It cannot be denied, however, that an incontestable title is a thing to be found with the greatest difficulty. Those of Spanish origin are reckoned the safest; yet do they too fail to be respected. After the annexation of Texas to the United States, speculators furnished themselves with Spanish titles, true or forged as they might be, to dispose of, both in Europe and in the United States, immense tracts of land that they had never seen, and which had been already long occupied. Besides this, the American government distributed three hundred and twenty acres of land to emigrants, and six hundred and forty to school-masters, ministers of religion, and married colonists, established in Texas before 1847. After the Mexican war, it made a new distribution to volunteers and soldiers: but, as the registries of the civil administration had been kept very negligently, it happened that among the lands thus distributed, and

considered as free, no small share had already its legitimate possessors, and others were uninhabitable from their situation. Then the new arrivals spread around the country, settling down wherever they pleased; and hence multitudes of law suits, so confused and interminable, were left to the discretion of judges who decided rather according to the persons of the litigants than to the justice of the cause.

Viewing the manner in which the Texian judges are elected, we cannot be surprised that impartiality is not considered by them a duty. Towards the close of my residence, an important case occurred, and made much noise. It was nothing less than to know whose was the site of the town. This case was to be heard after the election of the new judges. The validity of title was quite a secondary consideration in an affair of such importance; all depended on the number of voters in favour of one or other of the canvassing parties. Hence no means were left untried on each side to obtain votes; and we witnessed a renewal of those singular and tragi-comic scenes that stir up the population of the United States on occasions of important elections. Liberty in voting is, however, recognised in the new as in the older States, but everywhere is it rendered null and a sham, by force, intimidation and corruption.

Tables are placed in the streets, garnished with bottles, full of whiskey, which is liberally distributed to such as take a ticket bearing the name of a certain candidate. Those who had formed no opinion, drank freely in both camps. Both sides had their colours, one red, the other blue, and no man was without his colour either on his hat or in his button-hole. The horses and the dogs bore their colours also, the former on their manes, the latter on their

tails. Even Mexicans who took no interest in either side, and had merely come on commercial business, were supplied with the party colours. Things were carried so far that a supply of palm-leaf hats was procured, decorated with the distinguishing hues, and given gratis to such as accepted the tickets. Then came the processions, red and blue; and now the question was which party would have the longest and most splendid *cortége*. As a natural consequence, you might meet every evening in the streets numbers of electors drunk and battered; and not rarely might you recognise among their number the future magistrates for whom so much fuss was made, and so many bottles emptied.

Medical science is not much better represented in the United States than the magistracy. The doctor most in vogue in Brownsville was a Yankee, who in the time of the Mexican war had to perform the amputation of a leg. He knew not how to set about the matter, neither had he any surgical instruments, wherefore he got a butcher's saw, and with horrible skill began to saw this leg as he would a fagot of wood, though he had never even assisted at an amputation. The patient expired in the middle of this torturing operation. When Brownsville was founded, this doctor thought it desirable to become porter—a lucrative but tiresome occupation; but he soon returned to pestle and mortar. He killed so many, and so quickly too, that he had again to renounce his profession; and yet by force of intrigue and audacity, he got himself named representative to the Congress of Austin. The session at an end, he returns to Brownsville, and, unable to vanquish his fatal *penchant* for his early occupation, he becomes doctor again, after conning over some treatises on medicine. His therapeutic ac-

quirements were of such an order, that for a woman who died of consumption, he prescribed a strong dose of sulphuric acid, "*in order to burn the pulmonary tubercles.*" Two days after, I buried the poor woman. For a disease of the bowels he ordered *injections of melted Spanish wax.* His remedies, as well as the exploits of the sheriff, afforded amusement; but the unfortunate patients could not be amused by them. Yet was he *à la mode*, and took so great a fancy to titles and offices, that at the next election he stood for the vacant judgeship.

CHAP. III.

A WORD OF DOUBLE MEANING. — THE MINISTER, AND HIS THREE UNMARRIED DAUGHTERS. — A RENEGADE. — GENERAL AND INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY IN THE UNITED STATES. — DEMOCRACY. — THE FRONTIER MEXICANS. — VISIT TO MATAMOROS. — SOUVENIRS OF OLD MEXICO. — MEXICAN LIFE. — THE RANCHEROS. — TROUBADOURS. — POESY OF THE PEOPLE. — RELIGION OF THE RANCHEROS. — RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES AT THE FRONTIERS. — MARRIAGE OF THE LAST SCION OF THE MONTEZUMAS.

HAVING spoken of the magistracy and medical science in the new States of the Union, particularly in Texas, I am bound to say a few words about my opponents, the Protestant ministers of the frontier, without fear of being censured for partiality. The individuals of whom I am going to speak are no eccentric exceptions of a particular locality; they are the types of a class in all these countries.

I think I have already observed, in the early part of this journal, that the Methodists and Presbyterians constitute the largest sects among the Americans. Their ministers are likewise the most ignorant and the most intolerant. Those whom I met at Brownsville were hardly better adepts at theology than was the doctor, whose feats I have recorded, in pathology and therapeutics. The Methodist minister, for want of an audience, left the frontier shortly after my arrival at Brownsville. The Presbyterian was hardly more fortunate; for he alienated the minds of his co-religionists by equivocal conduct in a rather serious case. For want of a church he

had to preach in his own house, which was constructed of very slight boards. One day he proposed to his hearers to erect a brick building large enough to accommodate all the Presbyterians of the town; the project was agreed to; and for its prosecution he received three thousand dollars. But instead of building a chapel, as his parishioners expected, he made himself a very elegant house, in which himself and his large family were lodged most comfortably. The word *house* had a double meaning which the Presbyterians did not forget to him. Henceforth he was completely abandoned— his family and a few friends now constituting his entire auditory. His discourses were for the most part diatribes against the Pope and Papacy, subjects highly relished by the Presbyterians, as already observed. At the time of the siege of Matamoros, of which by and bye, he remained two entire hours on his knees on the roof of his new house, his hands stretched forth like those of Moses on the Mount, imploring the protection of heaven on the arms of the invaders. Notwithstanding his hatred of Catholic priests, he never was hostile to me personally; whenever I met him in the street, I saluted him, and he politely returned my greeting.

One of his *confrères*, more lucky than himself in pecuniary matters, had three daughters, who for years past were of an age to be married. The minister seeing no one propose for their hand, determined to wait no longer in the matter of their settlement in the world. With this view, he put in execution an idea essentially American. One Sunday he preached on the subject of marriage, amplifying the text in Genesis, "Increase and multiply." He proclaimed to his audience that this was a Divine *precept* and not a *counsel*. He descanted with

eloquence and warmth on the bliss of the hymeneal state, and ended his sermon by offering his three daughters, with three thousand dollars of fortune for each, to whomsoever would espouse them. He added that he would receive the names of the candidates after service; and that his choice would fall on those who would furnish the surest guarantee of moral character. A wag of an Irishman who happened to be present (they are always everywhere), did not wait for the time prescribed by the minister to make his voice heard, but asked him to put his name on the list FOR TWO. The meeting burst into laughter; and there was no rival found to the ambitious aspirant.

There was also at Brownsville a renegade who kept a school for boys and girls. He received from the Bible Society of New York an annual sum of five hundred dollars, to distribute bibles and pamphlets abusive of Catholicism among the Mexican population. Though I bore him no ill-will, he treated me with no kindred feeling. He hated me by instinct, and proved his hatred at the first opportunity. Several pious Catholics came to complain that this renegade taught Protestantism in his school, and was striving to corrupt the faith of the Catholic children. I waited upon him, and begged that he would confine his instructions within the domain of letters, otherwise, I said, I should be obliged in conscience to warn the parents, and thus the Catholic children would be all removed. He gave me a very ungracious reception, and went the length of menace. The families were consequently warned, and the children were sent to another school, taught by a Mexican. My friend, quite enraged as he became, went to the public market-place on the next Sunday, and held forth against

all priests in general, and myself in particular,— becoming eloquent on idolatry, the inquisition, and what not in this strain. He continued his sermons a month, and got them printed. At length, however, he lapsed into silence, for his harangues had no effect. I was liked in my parish. From the day of my arrival, I was placed on a footing of freedom and independence that secured me the esteem of the people; hence it was no easy matter for him to do me harm. As to that, indeed, Protestant ministers are no great obstacle to the propagation of Catholicism in Texas; for they are always too violent against us missionaries, and violence is never an efficacious means.

If isolated individuals present striking types, interesting as studies of manners, the general character and spirit of the population are not a whit less curious, as they reveal themselves in all their naked reality in public assemblies and political discussions.

In America, as you are free in the choice of a profession, so are you in the expression of political opinion. Hence, since the invasion of Cuba by the Americans, under General Lopez, agitators have multiplied demonstrations, and pushed on enlistments. In Texas these manœuvres were quite easy; for individuals ready for enrolment for any expedition, and for casting the die of life in the hope of pillage, have been always numerous. There have been at Brownsville several meetings, where all Americans were invited to pronounce on the great question of the hour. Some few, moderate and upright in their views, endeavoured to speak against the illegality of this usurpation; but a score of pistols were aimed at their heads, to keep their tongues more quiet.

At the risk of offending the blind and prejudiced

admirers of the United States, I affirm, with those writers who have studied impartially the history of that country, from the date of its independence to our own days, that, dating from the presidency of General Jackson, liberty has not reigned in the United States but in a very limited and relative way. The republic, as founded by Washington, can only be recognised in its outward forms. It is not a democracy that rules — it is demagogy. The opinion and will of the masses, ignorant, vicious, intolerant, passionate as they are, sway by pressure, violence, corruption and lawlessness. It is the blind masses that are everywhere masters at elections, and their vote, ever guided by a name or an idea, is never bestowed on probity and intelligence in matters of government. Hence, from the country magistrate to the President of the Union, every place is the prize of a vote. Vice reigns uncontrolled; you would say it was protected, especially in the new States; but there is very little personal security for the peaceful man, for the virtuous and the independent, in his political and religious opinions. Americans must have a clear stage for themselves, but to others they would not extend the smallest latitude. What American would dare to say to his countrymen, "You are in creed the most superstitious people on earth; in politics the most inconsistent, if not intolerant; in opinion the most despotic; in science, arts, and civilisation, the most behind; in morals the most corrupt; in liberty the slave of a popular despotism; towards your black and coloured slaves, the most pitiless and barbarous?" No citizen would now dare to use this language, though many believe it; for those who, seeing the work of Washington falling to pieces, have striven to point out

to their countrymen by word and pen the abyss towards which they were rushing, have dearly paid for their upright patriotism. Persecutions, blows, fire, have been their reward.

What a strange anomaly! Europeans, political historians and novelists, who have never lived in the United States, have said a good deal about the democracy of the country. If it exist, it is not the fault of the Americans, for they do their best to become aristocrats themselves. Equality is much less palatable there than people think in Europe. Take at random, even in the new States, on a steamer or in the street, any two men, and ask each what he is, you will find him captain, major, colonel, general, judge, *esquire* (Heaven knows of what). None will be a simple citizen.

These are the impressions that will be made on keen conscientious observers, who may study the manners and character of the people with a view to be instructed. Rest assured that those who observe things in a different light have fixed notions formed beforehand, or else have lived too short a time in the country to master its true character. American manners, as illustrated in Brownsville, did not engross my exclusive attention. The picture that I have drawn of this singular population, a picture, alas! but too true, was a forewarning to me of the difficulties which I had to encounter in the discharge of my ministry. Side by side with the Yankees, there was, as I have said, a very numerous Mexican population. Among the frontier Mexicans I found a stolid ignorance to remove, religious views to be modified and ceremonies to be purified from every heterogeneous alloy opposed to the solemnity of Catholic worship. The task was no easy one, for the

people stuck fast to their usages, which had in their favour all the strength of long observance. Yet was I not discouraged. I knew that the Mexican people, notwithstanding their faults and indifference, are docile and intelligent, and that if Heaven deigned to bless my efforts and fatigues, I might be the instrument of diffusing some little happiness over this corner of the earth, to which Providence had sent me. I knew that with God we can do all things; without Him, nothing. I reckoned on His aid to overcome the obstacles that stood in the way of the pure light of the Gospel; and my confidence in God was not vain. With a certain sweetness of manner, and a toleration of whatsoever was free or permissible; an impartiality and charity, in my relations with those of different religious persuasions, caste, or character; with energy and firmness in the discharge of my duty, I soon perceived that there was a means of taming and bending all these different natures, half savage and wholly ignorant though they were.

The great bulk of the Americans who live on the banks of the Rio Grande, from its mouth to Passo del Norte, even those of the towns, are of Indian or Indo-Mexican origin. The Spanish race is quite in a minority on those frontiers. They are of middle height; their features are for the most part regular, sometimes distinguished and noble; their eyes are large and bright, their hair long, black, curled, and frizzly, their skin brown, but soft, their teeth very white and beautiful, their hands and feet very small, their visage round. They are mild, passive, and apathetic. The Mexican's chief passion is his horse, the play, and the dance; cock and bull-fighting are his delight. Among the amateur

taureadors are found even women, who know how to bring down the bull with dexterity, grace, and boldness. I saw three of them at Matamoros, whom no small number of bulls valiantly prostrated had rendered almost celebrities.

To obtain a more accurate idea of Mexican life, I visited Matamoros, which is situated in Mexico opposite Brownsville. My ministry might one day or other bring me in contact with the parish priest, the authorities, and the inhabitants, among whom are reckoned several French and American merchants. Matamoros is not far from the river, and is the most important town of the frontier. I begged the Mexican consul at Brownsville to act as guide and introducer. This worthy representative of his country placed himself without demur at my disposal, accompanying his good services with a cigarette, which I quietly puffed while I asked him questions about the persons that I intended to visit. A few strokes of an oar took us to the opposite bank, where a shed is erected as a shelter for the custom house agents and some soldiers. These soldiers were dressed in brown, and wore a police cap, which admirably harmonised with their yellow, round, and beardless faces, and gave their mien more of the savage than of the soldier. The officers were well clad and had a very *distingué* air. These soldiers sleep nearly the entire day in a grove of the palma Christi planted near the shed. Judging from this specimen of Mexican soldiery, I was not surprised at the success of the American arms directed against them; but the cavalry have a more martial appearance. They have the stamp of being congenial to the soil, a feature not the least important or interesting of its character.

My heart bounded with joy as I trod this wonderful soil, abounding in silver and gold, blessed with a climate the most delicious on earth and a vegetation the most luxuriant. I felt all the poetry of youth spring up within me, inspired by the memory of the Spanish conquests in this rich and beautiful land. Imagination carried me back to the days of Cortez and good Las Casas, the apostle of the Indians, whose woes he so ably pleaded and bitterly bewailed. I repeopled, in thought, Palenca, the city of the desert, the ruins of which, discovered in the midst of a virgin forest, not quite a century ago, still cover a surface of eight leagues; and Mitla, the city of the dead, hardly inferior in extent to Palenca. I saw crowds from Cicimecos, Toltecs, Aztecs, and Tlaxcallians going to Papeutla, to Teocalli, and other immense temples of Yucatan, of Teotihuacan, of Anahuac, of Cholula, and of Tenuctitlan (now called Mexico), to offer sacrifices to Viltzlipultzi, the supreme God; to Tlaloch the god of vengeance, and their Neptune; to Ametochtli, their Bacchus, who carried on his head a vessel of mortar-shape into which they poured wine; to Quetzalcoat, their Mercury; to Matlalmy, goddess of water, who was represented in an undress of azure hue; to Tescatlipuca, god of providence, who wore glasses to see better with. But empires are blotted out and disappear like individuals. New times, new manners. Feather cinctures and pearl collars have been replaced by a less primitive costume. Time carries off every day another stone from these immense ruins of a people itself not less immense than they, whose ancient civilisation has left gigantic *manuscripts* of marble and granite, which defy the eye and mind of modern science. While my imagination thus carried me back to the days

when Mexican currency was cacao-nut, I was seated in a vehicle. Several were stationed in this spot, and two light and spirited horses whisked us over the short mile that separated us from the town in a few minutes and deposited us in the Plaza-Major.

This place is a perfect square, embellished with a garden in the centre, and encompassed with a double range of large Chinese lilacs forming a pleasing promenade. The western side of this square is formed by the church, a modern edifice, vast in its proportions, but presenting nothing remarkable in structure. Opposite the church are the buildings and offices of the *Ayuntamiento*. The houses, like those of the other two sides of the square, are simple in their architecture, of red brick, two stories high, and furnished with an iron balcony. The roofs are flat, forming a terrace which serves rather as a place for drying clothes than for family gathering. Behind the houses are gardens more or less extensive, where the orange-tree, the pomegranate-tree, the peach-tree, the palm-tree, the fig-tree grow. The streets are wide and at right angles.

During the greater part of the day all seems a desert. The shops are half closed and every one remains within doors. But at the first sound of the *Angelus*, a little before sunset, the windows and doors are thrown open, the streets fill, the ladies appear on the balconies in robes of bright muslin, the Plaza-Major is crowded with promenaders who saunter about, chat, laugh, and smoke till midnight. All is animation; the merry laugh and joyous word re-echo all around; the rich man on his balcony, the poor on his cabin sill, feel happy alike to live and to shake off the inaction of the day, while the cigarette sends up its tiny cloud in every direction.

Everywhere do chocolate and coffee with little cakes present their allurements with the balm of the evening air. The chatting becomes more noisy; and it would seem that people wish to make up for lost time, for during the day little is spoken. You would say that the sun stays the words on the lips and deprives of the power to pronounce them. The conversations turn mostly on poetry, on religion, on love, horses, music and dancing. Scandal and politics engage but little this sequestered people, favoured with a sky the most beautiful, a climate the mildest in the world.

My first visit was to the parish priest, a charming young man, who employed his private fortune and the revenues of his parish, for the succour of the poor and the completion of his church. He received me with warmth and cordiality, and offered me his services with a flowing heart. The prefect and civil authorities also loaded me with polite attentions. I ended my visits by paying one to the commander of the frontier Mexican forces, General Avalos, who had then an immense influence in the government of the country. This man, of whom I shall say more by and bye, was enormously corpulent. He seemed to me false and crafty, while his person inspired me with aversion, and subsequent events proved the justice of my first impressions.

On both banks of the Rio Grande, the Mexicans who do not live in towns or sell merchandise are *rancheros* (farmers). *Rancho*, which means *farm*, is often taken for a number of farms or a village. The country people are just as indolent as their countrymen of town. They have all the characteristics and all the defects of an infant people. Voluptuousness is surely their damning vice; but it is not so much the effect of depraved

morals, as of ignorance and effeminacy. I could never know how a ranchero lived, for he labours little or none; the very shadow of labour overpowers him, and he comprehends not activity, save in pleasures. In other respects, he is very frugal; under this mild and temperate sky, he can sleep wherever he will; in open air, under the shade of the fig tree, or mesquite tree, more agreeably than under the shelter of a roof. He lives on coffee, chocolate, *tortillas*, small flat cakes baked on the ashes or on heated flags; and on *tassajo*, beef sun-dried and cut up into slices which keep a long time. The rich rancheros enjoy the luxury of rice, spices, lamb dressed with dried raisins, sometimes even the *tamales*, a favourite dish of the Mexicans, a mixture of chopped meat, vegetables, spices, and dried fruits, rolled up in the shape of a cigar and dressed in a maize leaf. At Tampico and in the greater number of the towns of the interior, young girls prepare and sell tamales in the markets. After the mid-day repast, the Mexicans have their siesta, which lasts according to the season several hours.

When the ranchero is not either resting or amusing himself, he mounts his horse and canters over the plains and through the woods, to see his herds, to visit his friends, to buy provisions, or assist at a feast, a baptism, a marriage, or join in the fandango; but the ranchero never walks. Had he only half a mile to go, he does so on horseback. His horse, of which he is very proud, is his inseparable companion. He is content with a wretched hut for his residence, while he decorates his saddle and bridle with gold and silver ornaments. At home he is all filth, mounted on his horse he wears the gayest attire. Then he dons his broad-

brimmed hat, lined with green and trimmed with an edging or chain of gold. He wears a clean embroidered shirt, and blue velvet trousers with broad facings of black, beneath which, through the extremities, may be seen his wide white drawers, while a blue scarf of china crape encircles his waist, and huge silver spurs clank at his heels. The ranchero tills the soil to some extent, but herds of oxen, horses, goats, and sheep make up the bulk of his fortune. This kind of income costs him little labour; and therefore does he like it so much. The pasture lands are rich, fair, and numerous; and the cattle roam over them at large. From time to time the ranchero goes to see them, to know what horse he may sell at the next fair in order to buy dresses for his children's god-mothers — what oxen will furnish most tassajo, and what lamb will meet the expense of a marriage or baptism-feast.

Many of the rancheros, without the slightest instruction in music, play the guitar or mandoline with no less taste than talent. With this accompaniment sometimes they sing their native melodies and romances, which relate chiefly to love subjects, the beauties of tropical nature, or the memories of their forefathers. There are several ballads of the old Spanish troubadours still in great vogue. It was often my pleasure to hear the rancheros sing in the evenings near the hut where I was taking rest, during my excursions in the solitudes of the interior. Their voices are sweet and their songs racy with the poetry of nature. The greater part of their nights they pass in dancing, singing, relating fantastic stories as history, while they smoke their cigarettes beneath some favourite tree. During the long winter evenings, while sitting on the prairie grass, I have obtained

some scraps of precious interesting information listening to some of these narrators. You still meet in this part of the frontiers a kind of itinerant troubadour who goes from rancho to rancho, singing to the accompaniment of the mandoline, setting the young folk to dance, telling about all he has heard and seen in his travels, and as payment receiving hospitality and a few reals.

What chiefly characterises the country Mexican is extreme meekness of disposition— apathy, listlessness, carried to amiability. You also discern in his character a most lively appreciation of the beauties of nature. On a fine summer night I was reclining on my hammock beneath a gallery of boards and wild osier which I had built up against the presbytery. From my hammock I could gaze on a pretty garden which I had laid out during my leisure hours; and to the rear of this garden I could also observe that of Fort Brown. Isidore, an old Mexican soldier and my man of all work—cook, butler, sacristan—came and seated himself beside my hammock, and while with cool *nonchalance* he puffed clouds of azure smoke from his cigarette, he in a loud tone, and heedless whether I slept or not, directed towards me the following monologue on the beauties of the heavens and the earth. "See, Señor Don Emanuel, what a charming night it is! what sweet mellow temperature! what pure and balmy air! what silence in all nature! how this silence of night ravishes my soul! Do you hear the cry of the widow (a long-tailed bird), as she flies along and flutters in the distance? Whither does she roam, poor bird? Why does she not sleep beneath the thick broad shade of the ebony tree? Mystery of God!" added he, and lapsed into a profound reverie. In an instant he resumed: "Do you

see those myriads of stars whose twinkling splendour lights the plains like the timid doubtful twilight? And those majestic palm trees, whose graceful branches gently poise themselves against the clear blue sky, seeming as if at night time they bear fruit of fire, suspended from every branch? And those stars that fall and fade away, leaving behind them a light narrow cascade of diamonds? Oh! how wonderful are the works of God!"

This was not the first time I had thus heard those poor people speak. Yet how few of them can read or write. I was wrapt in amazement and delight at the poetic rapture of my old soldier; indeed I could not have conveyed my own feelings better, at the view of this picture, at once so simple and sublime, of one of the most charming nights at the tropic.

Novel writers and tourists have greatly exaggerated the faults of the Mexicans. These gentlemen get up adventures at will; stories of robbers and bandits, from whose hands, however, they always escape safe and sound; intrigues wherein the poignard and a dark mystery play their parts. Such things as these no doubt impart a certain interest to a recital; but truth obliges me to say, that these dramatic stories are not to be relied on. It is true there are many robbers among the poorer Mexicans, but they rob from necessity, and do so in a very clumsy way. As to all that people talk about assassinations in Mexico, it is characterised at once by exaggeration and inaccuracy. A murder is commonly the consequence of what begins in a playful quarrel. The vengeance of an injured husband does not arm him with the knife, for he is no jealous husband, but allows his helpmate as much liberty as

he assumes for himself. At Brownsville, and along the entire Texian frontier, murder is very common; but if the Americans have just claim to the credit of half of them, and if we only reflect on how they have treated the Mexicans, we shall be rather surprised that the Mexican's vengeance is so easily satisfied. As to crime, however, we need only say, that neither Europe nor America need be jealous of Mexico.

As to religion, the rancheros had only vague ideas about it, with some obscure recollections. They hardly knew more than two sacraments, baptism and matrimony, and they made no scruple of dispensing themselves from the latter, while they valued confession only at the hour of death. Marriage was divided into two distinct ceremonies, one of which, corresponding with our espousals, was called *las tomadas de las manos*, the taking of hands. This was the simple marriage. The other was the more important and definitive act, called *velacion*. At this ceremony the spouses are covered with a veil, and the priest recites prayers over them. The spouses, their parents, and the witnesses carry lighted tapers, called *vela*, in allusion to the very name of the ceremony. Then the bridegroom deposits on a plate a few coins; the priest blesses them, and gives them back to him, and he hands them to the bride as the price of her liberty. In reality, this ceremony is regarded by the rancheros as the true sacrament of marriage. Frequently married people called on me to marry them to others, pretending that they had been united only by the "taking of hands."

The funerals of children were always accompanied with public rejoicings. The *angelito* (little angel), as they called the remains of the young person, was

dressed in white and ornamented with flowers; and sometimes wings were added, with a crown of gilt paper. The dressing ended, the remains were placed on a chair or under a table, covered with white linen, and strewn with votive flowers. A friend or parent took the light burthen on his head or shoulders, while a procession was formed to the church, and preceded by a band composed of a big drum, a violin, and a clarionet, which played polkas, waltzes, and contradanses. The procession was followed by a crowd of urchins, pelting squibs and rockets, and laughing like young demons as their missives fell on the parents or their invited friends.

But if neither the belief nor the practice of the rancheros was without reproach, the fault was not entirely theirs. Before the war of Mexican Independence, the most isolated villages and inhabitants had visits from the Spanish missionaries regularly enough, though the great distance made those visits both few and far between. These missionaries could only impart the most elementary instruction, accommodating themselves to the understanding of their little flocks, so as to strike the senses by the form of worship, rather than open the mind by instructions more complete. The ceremonies of the Church used to borrow from time and place certain peculiar features to which those people attached great interest and importance. It is much easier to go to church and join a procession than to reform one's life. As the Spanish missionaries ceased their visits, all pertaining to doctrine and morality fell into the shade. Ignorance, indifference, the passions, soon made the lessons of the priest to be forgotten; but what struck the senses was more tenacious

of its hold. The substance was lost in the form, and external practices, as is natural to the Mexicans, became the chief objects of attention — the most worthy of the affection of a poor people. This religious decadence was a sad sight; but by God's grace aiding the energy of man, many obstacles are being overcome. My task at Brownsville, though more fatiguing, was not so irksome, however, as at Castroville.

I had the honour to bless the marriage of the living descendant of Montezuma with a rich proprietor of the state of Cohahuila. She was twenty-four years old; her features were quite handsome, very regular, noble, and withal sweet; her gait easy and listless. The olden glory of her race revealed itself in her entire figure. I asked her some questions about her position. She told me she was an orphan, without a relative even to the remotest degree; and that of all the wealth of her house nothing remained to her but some lands in Texas. These lands were of vast extent it is true; but since the annexation of Texas to the United States, her right to proprietorship had been contested and assailed in a variety of ways.

She had been offered 6000 dollars for her inheritance, and fearing to be stripped of all, she accepted this miserable sum, and married the man she loved. Such is the simple history of the last heir of a great name, of the last scion of that great and powerful monarch whose treasures knew no bounds, and who perished the victim of the cruel cupidity of the Spanish conquerors. She went with her husband to continue in obscurity, her existence unknown, indeed, to the world, but withal peaceful and happy.

CHAP. IV.

A TOUR OF OBSERVATION. — THE BANKS OF THE RIO GRANDE. — REYNOSA. — REYNOSA-VIEJA. — AN ISRAELITISH BEDFELLOW. — RIO GRANDE CITY. — PROJECTS. — MEETING A RATTLE-SNAKE. — ROMA. — THE ALAMO. — THE BATHERS. — MIER. — EMBARRASSING PRESENTS. — A USEFUL APPARITION. — DEPARTURE FROM ROMA. — TÊTE-À-TÊTE WITH NEW INDIANS. — CAMARGO. — A SURPRISE. — RANCHERO MARRIAGE. — SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP. — THE AURORA IN A WOOD.

A MONTH after my arrival at Brownsville, having made some progress in speaking Spanish, I undertook a tour of observation among the populations scattered along both banks of the river. I had to penetrate northward as far as a small American settlement called Alamo, from Brownsville about three hundred miles. I embarked on the steamboat *Comanche*, which was to ascend the river with merchandise for several settlements along its banks.

The Rio Grande, as I have already said, takes its rise at the foot of the Sierra Verde, one of the two great southern ramifications of the Rocky Mountains. It drains and fertilises an immense valley for several hundred leagues in its southern course, and before disemboguing into the Gulf of Mexico, it makes a thousand windings. Sometimes, on occasions of great floods, the sand is carried down in masses, and opens for the waters new beds, while the old thus detached become lakelets, often very graceful in their aspect. The banks are flat, and more wild, indeed, than picturesque.

Some woodlands, rather sparse of trees; tracts covered with long dry grass or reeds; numbers of reeds; sometimes a tract of fine white sand, in which the scattered herds of cattle, that come to slake their thirst in the stream, lie half buried while they ruminate; or steep, low banks, constantly eaten into by the water; here and there the little hut of a ranchero, whence issued a thin spiral of white smoke; such were the principal features that successively relieved the monotony of these cheerless solitudes.

In the day time the heat was quite suffocating — we were smothered in an atmosphere of fire. In the evening we would take our mattresses to the after-deck, to enjoy the freshness of the night breeze. After three or four days of uninterrupted steaming, the boat stuck so effectually, that no exertion could get her off. The captain had to discharge her cargo, in order to lighten her, and set her afloat. All of us disembarked, and were obliged to pursue our journey by land. This mishap modified my itinerary in a rather singular way. To reach Alamo by land, I had to travel more in Mexico than Texas, for this part of the Texian frontier is quite destitute of roads. In Mexico, on the contrary, you have still the old Spanish highways; so that often the shortest and even the only route between two Texian ranchos is to cross the Rio Grande and travel the Mexican territory, and to recross the Rio Grande again near one's destination. Here, then, I was going to make one of those long journeys on horseback, to which I had been so much accustomed during my first mission; but in this I had fewer dangers and privations to encounter.

We first directed our course towards the Mexican hamlet of Reynosa. These small frontier towns present but little interest. The church of Reynosa is of stone, of oblong shape, having a massive steeple, square in form, and heavy-looking in construction. Some houses are built as in the time of Fernand Cortez, with *adaubes*, large bricks baked in the sun. Here we crossed the Rio Grande for Texas, where we secured horses in an American establishment called Edinburgh.

Having taken a modest breakfast, we returned to Reynosa, the Spanish priest of which procured us a guide, and we continued our journey under a scorching sun. The road was lined sometimes with odoriferous trees and the perfumed wild vine; sometimes it intersected an arid desert soil, or calcareous tracts, whose only vegetation was the cactus, the nopal, or certain plants full of thorns and destitute of leaves: neither bird nor animal appeared to enliven either with song or gambol these burning solitudes.

My fellow travellers were Jewish merchants, Methodists, and free-thinkers. I could not escape one of those religious controversies so much sought after in America; but so much were we overpowered by the heat, that no one entered warmly into discussion. The words died on our lips, without our having the power to articulate them. The horses jogged along slowly in single file like geese. Perspiration issued abundantly from every pore, and trickled down our bodies. We could scarcely breathe, so that at last we were obliged to await the freshness of the evening breeze.

At length the trees assumed a reddish tint, the shadows became longer while they turned eastward, the

leaves gently oscillated in the rising breeze, and the crowing of a cock and the lowing of herds announced a rancho. We had arrived at Reynosa Vieja, which was a large square formed by the huts of the principal inhabitants. Each angle terminated a roadway carpeted with light tufted grass. The environs were well cultivated; and the population of this immense rancho lived in ease and comfort. At the time of our entrance, men and cattle were enjoying the refreshing breeze, here and there beneath the trees that lined the court and the pathways.

We went to take up our quarters in the outer court of one of the most wealthy proprietors of Reynosa Vieja. Our horses were unsaddled and secured for the night, before no stinted quantity of maize straw, one of the best descriptions of fodder in the country. While supper was getting ready, one of my fellow travellers introduced me to several rich rancheros. Everywhere they received us with unaffected cordiality, offering us cigarettes, chocolate, and little delicious honey-cakes. It was in this rancho that I learned for certain that the Mexicans used to bury their money when they had no immediate use for it. It was a habit peculiar to the old Spaniards; and in the towns, as well as in country places, you often meet with vessels full of dollars and doubloons, hidden in the walls or under the trees. The population of Reynosa Vieja, numbering, as it did, certainly not fewer than one hundred families, was left almost entirely to itself in the matter of religion. It had hardly ever a visit from a priest, for the people had to go to Reynosa in cases of marriage and baptism, and they died without sacraments. I also learned that several families scat-

tered all over these frontiers were in the same sad condition.

An hour after our arrival, one of the guides came to announce supper, which consisted of boiled fowl, rice, and dried raisins, all dressed with pepper and other spices. The tortillas supplied did the duty at once of spoon and of bread. This supper was refreshing enough, and at its close we were each fortunately served with a cup of milk. We had the good luck to find some mattresses in the rancho, and these we stretched out in the outer court; but not having quite enough of them, we were obliged to take each man a bed-fellow. Mine was a young Jew of the name of Moses, who, before falling asleep, said to me, while he laughed,

"Have you suspected that you are going to sleep with a Jew?"

"No. And you, have you dreamt that your bed-fellow is a Catholic priest?"

"Not the remotest idea of it; you now inform me for the first time."

"Think you, then, that our slumbers will be the less tranquil?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, then, good night."

"Good night."

And I soon heard him snorting like a steam-engine just getting under way. As for me, notwithstanding the fatigue of a long journey on a bony horse, under a burning sun, sleep I could not. I saw glittering over my head those myriads of stars that I so often gazed upon with admiration during my first peregrinations. Among the constellations I looked out for the Shepherd, which in my boyhood in France I loved so to gaze upon, when

nature, shrouded in the mysterious veil of twilight, had only this solitary star twinkling overhead to light its track. The palm branches beneath which I lay gently vibrated in the air; the temperate breeze, breathing gently as it came, embalmed by the sweet odours of the woodland flowers, carolled in the distance, while it imparted to the sycamore leaves a voice of song strange and full of harmony resembling the melancholy sighs of many Æolian harps. I breathed these evening perfumes with the utmost delight, and listened attentively to the languishing murmuring of leaf and breeze, cut short at intervals by the plaintive cry of the widow bird as she hopped from tree to tree. At length I fell asleep wrapped in golden dreams.

We were awakened before daylight by the neighing of our horses, already saddled by the guides, and set out notwithstanding the darkness, which scarcely allowed us to see our way before us. From Reynosa Vieja to Camargo the route is forced with no small difficulty through acacias, nopals, brushwood, all quite thick set in these quarters. Towards midday we halted again, to bait our horses and have some refreshments ourselves. Goat's milk was the entire bill of fare of our dinner. We reached Camargo, but instead of halting there, we struck out to the right, by a narrow pathway winding through a thick woodland, which brought us opposite the Rancho Davis. Again we crossed the Rio Grande, here both wide and deep, for it is, after receiving several tributaries — the Rio de San Juan, the Rio Alamo, and the Salado — further enlarged by the Rio Sabinos, which comes down from the Sierra Madre.

The Rancho Davis is now better known under the name of the Rio Grande City. It is a vast assemblage of

American stores and Mexican huts, where smuggling progresses on an extensive scale. The Mexican government cannot afford for it a sufficient number of soldiers and customs officers; and hence the productions of the United States make their way into Mexico with little difficulty. Thus do the American dealers at the Rancho Davis realise immense fortunes. The United States government supports at Rio Grande City two or three companies of the regular army, whose quarters are to the south of the city. The barracks, depôt stores, officers' houses and gardens cover an area of several acres. I had letters of introduction to the Commandant of the fort and to the doctor, and presented them at their addresses; but being an eyewitness of the barbarous treatment that the Irish Catholic soldiers are now subjected to, I left with disgust, and never again set foot in the garrison. I saw an Irishman dying in chains in his bed!!!

The town is protected from the eastern winds by a chain of hills of diluvian formation. Trees and verdure are rarely to be seen, so that the heat reflected from the river sand, and from the rocks and gravel of the hills, makes the place a veritable furnace. One should possess the incombustible nature of the Salamander to live there any length of time; and despite its excellent site, I question if it will ever assume any considerable development.

One of my free-thinking companions offered me the hospitality of his house; and not knowing where to put up, I gratefully accepted his offer. Anxious to erect a church at Rio Grande City, I sounded the inhabitants on the subject. Catholics and Protestants vied in seconding my views, and offered aid with their

purses for the purpose. This eagerness was natural enough, for a church gives importance and character to a new settlement, as it does moral improvement to its people. Several Mexicans of Camargo and the frontiers were anxious to settle at Rio Grande City, where things were cheap, but the immorality of the people held them back. Besides, they had great repugnance at being deprived entirely of the succours of religion. The erection of a church would remedy these two evils, and hence the general eagerness to co-operate with me when the plan of the building was drawn and the outlay calculated. But I could find none who would undertake the direction of the work, or assume the responsibility of its completion; and, for my own part, not being able to absent myself very long from Brownsville, I could not assume the responsibility. Thus, with many and deep regrets, I had to defer the project to a future time.

Having devoted several days to journeys in the neighbourhood of Rio Grande City, I set off alone for Roma, an American settlement more northward. My route was a winding road, between the Rio Grande and a chain of hills that issue from the Sierra Verde and other ramifications of the Rocky Mountains. At this latitude, the plains of Western Texas disappear; the country is diversified, yet its general aspect is melancholy. The mesquite tree, the acacia, the wild strawberry, the carob, and a countless family of the cactus, are the only ornaments of these arid stony hills. Sometimes your way lies on a whitish rock, which so reflects the sun's rays as almost to scorch the eyes. Should a plant succeed in working its way through some sheltered fissure more fertile than the surrounding desert, it soon expires under the devouring heat. As a compensation, however, should you meet with

a ravine or stream, or more moist soil, you find the vegetation incomparably rich and fruitful. In some of those ravines I found gigantic *polipodiums*, *aspleniums*, and other species of fern, which the prolonged droughts render very rare in Texas. A death-like silence prevails in this desert; even the voice of a bird, or the roar of an animal, hardly ever relieves the profound stillness. The only living thing that I met during my journey filled me with pleasure. It was—must I say it?—a rattle-snake. I had seen none of them since my return to America. Were its bite not mortal I could have dismounted to embrace the creature, for it brought Castroville back to memory. After this meeting, I pursued my journey musing pensively.

I arrived at Roma towards evening, and took up my abode with one of the principal dealers, who was a Jew like the rest of them in this settlement. It is a jumble of stores and wooden cabins, mud and reed huts, flung here and there on a hillock, half roofed or half unroofed. The inhabitants are for the most part Americans. The Mexicans are poor and few in number, but they are most anxious to have a priest to instruct them in their duties, to support them in their misery, and to close their eyes at the supreme moment of death. But, first of all, a church was needed, and the Mexicans promised me all the materials, while the ten Jewish dealers, who formed the financial aristocracy of Roma, offered me each five hundred francs. But there, as at Rio Grande City, when on the point of putting our design into execution, I could find no one who would undertake the management of the work. Although this journey to the interior was necessary for me to learn the wants and religious condition of the districts depending on my

jurisdiction, I could not abandon the numerous population of Brownsville to become architect and master-mason for two or three months.

My next visits were to Alamo and Mier. I begged of the pastor of the latter town to see the Catholics of Roma and its neighbourhood from time to time. I was accompanied by the sheriff of Roma, an amiable and cordial young man. The route, as it reached the top of the hills, opened before me a view of immense extent: to the east the boundless plains of Texas were lost in the white-blue haze of the horizon, and to the west the blue mountains of the Sierra Madre raised their peaky heads. Despite the distance, you could easily distinguish their enormous masses, and their fantastic peaks, gilded by the rays of the sinking sun. Northward the hills on which we travelled were lost in a semi-circle of distant ridges, while all around our eyes fell upon an ocean of golden light.

Before arriving at Alamo, we had to ascend and descend a veritable chaos of small round knolls, pitched in a crowded fashion on the western ridge of the hills. We travelled over very fertile and well cultivated tracts. Alamo is a small American village of recent origin, taking its name from the nearest Mexican river, which falls into the Rio Grande. It is eligibly situated, and time may be spent there agreeably enough. On one side, the Rio Grande waters the gardens; on the other, gigantic sycamores, with their net-work of branches, form a kind of dome over house-roofs, that protects them, as a parent, from the raging heat. We crossed the Rio Grande in a flat-bottomed boat. At this point the right bank is of a sandy nature, and rather elevated. The table-land on which

lies the route to Mier, is covered over with sedge, copse, and mesquite trees. Here and there you meet a solitary rancho, truly wretched-looking. The road is intersected by numbers of pathways formed by the cattle as they go to drink at the river. Before arriving at Mier we had to cross a wide but not very deep stream, in which a number of people of every age and each sex were bathing. At first sight I thought they were gold-nugget seekers, but I was soon undeceived. On the Mexican frontiers, ideas of social propriety and decency are still in their infancy.

In its site Mier does not yield to any town of the frontiers. It is a town of amphitheatre-shape, perched on masses of rock, moderately elevated, with its church spire, palm, and aloe trees, cut out in profile against the azure firmament, while it still retains its Mexican complexion. You clearly see that the Anglo-Saxon race has not penetrated thus far. We had to ascend stairs hewn in the rock; nor did our horses perform the escalade without considerable danger. Like all Mexican towns, Mier has its square, in which are situated the church and the principal residences; and from it ramify a number of fine wide streets in different directions.

Our first visit was to the pastor, who received us most kindly, at once offered us the cigarette, chocolate, and sweet cakes, and even made me a present of one of those necklaces of blue Venetian pearls worn by the Mexican priests. He also wished me to accept a deer and a young ass. You may well wonder that I refused, but my refusal took the *curé* by surprise, for it seems he set a high value on those two animals. I explained to him how difficult it would be for me to traverse a distance of more than 300 miles, encumbered

at once with a horse, an ass, and a deer; and I represented all the dangers to which they would be exposed, were anything untoward to occur to myself. The fear that his deer and little ass might suffer too much on the journey, decided the good *curé* not to press his offer further.

I paid two or three more visits in the town, but as I was obliged to smoke a cigarette, and swallow a cup of chocolate in every house that I visited, I had to regulate the number of my visits by the state of my appetite. I observed that in Mier, the people's skin is fairer than in other towns of the frontiers, and both sexes are mostly strikingly handsome. Their features are regular, delicate, and of a decidedly noble cast; and they speak the Spanish more pure, correct, and less corrupted with Indian words or phrases.

It was far advanced in the night when we quitted Mier. Not being able ourselves to decide which of the several pathways was the one leading back to the Rio Grande, we allowed our horses to guide themselves. After an hour's journeying we saw at a distance lights, which we took for the fires of Alamo. We were mistaken, however, for our horses, by a circuitous route, took us back to Mier, while we were confidently trusting to their instinct. Each of us was screwing his wits as to the means of escaping a second like misadventure, when all of a sudden we saw quite close to us the shadow of a man, whose costume resembled that of the Apollo Belvidere. It was a péon Mexican, who was returning from the fields on his way to Mier. We inquired the way to Alamo amid this labyrinth of bye-ways; but, instead of answering us, he took the bridle of my horse, conducted us up the plateau, accompanied us for ten minutes, and

said, in parting, "Let the horses take their own course," and vanished like an apparition.

We arrived at the banks of the river without accident about midnight; but the ferryman had left his boat, and gone to sleep in his cabin. I had to parade before him my titles and character, in order to induce him to transfer us to the left bank. The night had grown brighter, with the breeze fresher and more balmy. The road was wide, so that our return would have been quite an agreeable promenade, had not prosy sleep closed our eyes to its charms. By the time we had arrived at Roma, it was rather late to call at the house of my Jewish host, to pass the remainder of the night there. The sheriff begged of me to remain with himself, but, having lost the key of his hall door, we had to enter by a window. However, we lost not much time or labour in this piece of gymnastics. The sheriff had only one bed; and this, in spite of all my opposition, I had to accept, the sheriff sleeping on the boards, wrapped up in his blanket.

Every day brought me a new proof that the French Missionary in America secures without any difficulty the sympathy of Jews and Protestants in numbers, by only manifesting a certain amount of confidence and frankness, while he remains inflexible in the performance of his duties. Those poor people, who have not the happiness to profess and to practise Catholic doctrine, insensibly shake off their prejudices against ourselves and our religion, when we unfold to them a benevolent heart, notwithstanding the difference of our religious tenets. A different manner of acting would not be consistent with either prudence or religion; it would only have the effect of souring still more our opponents, and of

widening the chasm that separates us from those whom it is our pious wish to draw within the bond of unity.

As my financial resources were just running out, I resolved to return to Brownsville and took my leave of the sheriff. Poor young man! Afterwards he fell by the hand of an assassin in the discharge of his duties. In all sincerity I thanked the worthy merchants whose hospitality I had enjoyed, and I set out for Rio Grande City.

I followed the first path I met with, and it brought me to the river; but I had missed my way. To recover it I boldly struck into a thicket, never minding the thorns and the scratches, nor the fragments of my clothes which they kept behind, hanging from acacia and mesquite branches. I trotted along a whole hour, and had made no more than half a mile, when all of a sudden I found myself in the presence of nine Indians, three of whom were women; the other six were armed with arrows. I grasped my pistol, and cried—"Halt." They halted like soldiers at the command of their officer. One of them came near and addressed me as a Mexican. The sound of this tongue excited within me a lively pleasure. I drew breath, knowing that I had to do with Manzos (good) Indians.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

The Indians told me that they were in quest of game, but the scarcity of it on the Mexican frontier drove them as far as Texas.

"I am," I replied, "chief of prayer on the banks of the great waters. I have come into the interior to visit the worshippers of the Great Spirit, and I return to my cabin."

He eyed me with astonishment.

"Why does not the chief of prayer follow the great road quite near him? The way of the long grass is not quite easy."

I durst not say that I had lost my way lest he might be tempted to murder me, in order to have my horse and arms.

"True," I replied, "the way of the long grass is not easy, but the breath of the Great Spirit makes the leaves of trees move there. It gives a freshness to pale faces, and mesquite branches prevent the fire from the heavens from injuring the traveller."

During this dialogue the rest of the Indians had drawn closer, and the oldest of them asked for tobacco. I had neither money nor tobacco: I told them so; and left them at once, saying my good bye and wishing them a prosperous chase. Meanwhile I bethought me that they said the great path was close by. By *great path* they meant, no doubt, the high road. I turned to the left, and in truth I soon found myself in the right road. The meeting with these Indians had made me feverish, I avow; I could never gaze on those figures of vermilion hue, prussian blue, and copper, without experiencing a smothering heart ache. I went to the bottom of a ravine where a stream flowed quietly in a rocky bed overgrown with moss, and having cooled my lips, and stayed my excitement, I remounted without delay, and soon arrived at Rio Grande City.

I stayed no longer here than to say good bye to the inhabitants, then crossed the Rio Grande and directed my way to Camargo. I was alone, and on foot, and the road by which I had to travel ran through a wood. It was a wide and handsome road; but, with sand and heat, my progress was slow indeed, and tiresome. The

town is only a few miles from the river; yet, by the time of my arrival, I was quite exhausted.

Camargo resembles all the towns of these frontiers. Indeed, you would say they were all built on the same plan by the same architect. The worthy pastor, poorly accommodated and fed as he was, in a hut formed of stakes sunk in the earth and interwoven with branches, which were over-laid with a kind of glazed earth, gave me bed and entertainment from Saturday till Monday. On Saturday I assisted at the high mass, when the sacred music was played on a large drum, a trombone, two clarionets, and several violins. However, all did their best; and this singular orchestra produced no mediocre effect in this old and simple church. A great surprise awaited me. During the elevation they commenced playing the *Marseillaise*. In such a place and at such a moment the selection was rather queer. True, throughout all America, the *Marseillaise* is quite the rage; and often in drawing-rooms and on board steamers I have been requested to chant this revolutionary hymn. Perhaps, it was to do me honour that it was sung this very day in the church of Camargo.

The pastor procured for me a guide and two horses, and, on the following Monday, I set off at three o'clock in the morning, notwithstanding the darkness. The road was wide and solid; and we stepped along briskly, in order to make the most of the day before the heat set in. I was two hours *en route* when I heard the tread of several horsemen in full gallop behind me. There were about fifty men and women in gala dress. They passed on quite close to us at full gallop, some sending forth rather shrill notes, others humming fandango airs. They resembled a horde of madmen let loose, or of

Indians enjoying a holiday. I inquired of my guide what this whirl of human beings that had just passed us meant. He told me it was the marriage party to which we had been invited, but I knew nothing whatever of wedding or invitation; still, in this very circumstance, I saw an excellent study of manners, and was delighted with the opportunity. My guide asked me to follow the party, for the way was long and monotonous. We set off at a gallop to overtake the party, which still continued at full speed, shouting, roaring, singing, in a thick cloud of dust raised by the horses' feet, and arrived at about ten o'clock A.M. at a rancho which consisted of about a score of wretched huts of stakes and reeds, where long tables laid out under a temporary awning of branches were prepared for us.

I was scarcely installed in my tent, the owner of which was a relation of my guide's, when medals, images, crosses, and beads were brought to me from all quarters to be blessed. For each blessing, the owner of the article chose a godfather and godmother, who, with himself and the priest, became *Compadre* and *Comadre de benediccion*, so that in about an hour I was related to the entire rancho. The frontier Mexicans love to multiply these spiritual ties, and thus in the course of his travels is he sure to meet, even in the smallest rancho, some relative or some friend of a relative. He then does not indeed receive hospitality; he takes it as a matter of course; and installs himself as if at home. After two years' ministry on the banks of the Rio Grande, my relations counted by thousands in town and rancho. Often I failed to recognise the man who would familiarly salute me in these words, "*Buenos dias, señor Compadre don Emanuelito.*" The Mexicans

are quite liberal in the use of the diminutive termination *ito*, as a mark of affection.

At mid-day the wedding feast was served up, and I had the place of honour. The meal consisted of rice soup without meat, but prepared with plenty of raisins and spices. Next came roast kid, cut up into pieces, and floating in a horrid sauce of beef-suet, pepper, and spices. After the first taste, I felt as if my throat was on fire. This beef-suet tasted like melted tallow, and turned my heart. After the kid came *tassajo*, likewise dressed in this abominable sauce. I had to summon up all my energy to swallow these frightful *ragoûts*. My study of manners and habits was costing me dear, and I got out of humour with my guide for having accepted the invitation without my previous concurrence; but, like the rest of the guests, his stomach was well used to these national sauces, and he ate like Sancho Panza at the marriage of Gamache. The only drink was a jug of whisky, which was sent round at the close of the repast. This time I stoutly refused, and asked for water, for I was so parched with thirst, that I thought I could quaff the Rio Grande at a draught. After dinner they withdrew to the huts or under the trees, for shelter for the siesta; and at four o'clock I departed with my guide; not, however, without saying adieu to all my new relations, an operation that engaged so long that a very late hour witnessed our arrival at Reynosa Vieja. All were in bed; but my guide awakened one of his female relatives, who gave me a water melon for supper, and a mattress on which I lay in the great square. I was buried in sleep when, at about one o'clock in the morning, my guide shook me with a determination which I could not resist. He gave a

thousand reasons why we should start at midnight, and urged me so effectually, that in the end I gave in with a sinking heart. To shorten the route, we struck into a wood of acacias, so dense, that I left there behind me no small portion of my apparel. Blind to all before me, I every instant knocked against the branches, the thorns of which smeared my hands and face with streams of blood. The path which we followed was sometimes so narrow and choked up, that to make my way I was obliged to stretch at full length on the horse. I then heartily regretted having yielded to the pressing suggestions of my guide; but it was too late to retrace our steps, and I vowed never again to travel by night; as if indeed the poor missionary could choose his time, and was not in duty bound, whenever duty called, to travel without murmur or hesitation. However, day-dawn in its first faint colouring put to flight all my *ennuis*, and I soon enough forgot my recent sufferings.

A penetrating odour filled the wood; the vanilla, the pachuli, the jessamine, the ebony tree, and thousands of wild vines saturated the morning breeze with delicious perfumes. The blustering voice of the cardinal, the languishing coo of the turtle, the sad sweet moan of the blue bird, the song of the bird of paradise, and the mocker, scattered around a charming medley of clear and plaintive notes. A light dew had strewn on the leaves of the trees and plants a thousand liquid pearls, which refracted the pure bright ray into its prismatic colours. These perfumes, this gentle air, these songs, and these brilliant hues did make me happy. This awaking of nature conveyed into my soul a feeling of undefined bliss; a vague happiness which I would

not have exchanged for all the joys of earth, while it raised my thoughts towards heaven. In these vast solitudes nature at every instant presents to the eye pictures in which the sublime is ever portrayed, now under the smiling and varied forms of virgin forests and unexplored mountains, now in the guise of a scorching or a monotonous desert. Everywhere she instils into the Christian's soul sentiments and treasures of poetry, of peace, and of gratitude towards the Creator of those wonders.

CHAP. V.

A STRONG MAN. — A STORM IN THE WOODS. — A SERIOUS FALL. — A DISAGREEABLE ERROR. — BEGINNING OF A LONG FAST. — A BAI NIGHT. — CRITICAL JOURNEY. — THE FUNERAL CROSSES. — RANCHO DE LA PALMA. — RETURN TO BROWNSVILLE. — A CONFRÈRE. — SUFFERINGS. — MOURNING. — MEDICINE AMONG THE RANCHEROS. — THE FEMALE WEEPERS. — INTERMENT OF A CONVERTED JEW. — A WELL-SPENT JOURNEY. — CRUEL SEPARATION. — DUTY OF FRIENDSHIP.

After much fatigue undergone in the woods, I arrived at Reynosa, and proceeded to the parish priest, whom I found in conference with one Antonio Rodriguez, celebrated, as well as his brother, for his Herculean strength. I was told that Antonio one day, to give a proof of his strength, seized a mule by the hind legs, and notwithstanding the cries and blows of the bystanders, the mule could not move an inch. The fame of both brothers was as good as a police station to the neighbourhood. If a horse had gone astray or been stolen, it was rumoured that the Rodriguez were commissioned to make search, and soon enough the animal came back to its stable.

I returned to Edinburgh with the intention of making my way to Brownsville along the Rio Grande, but I could get no horse on the eve of St. James; and the Mexicans, who have peculiar veneration for Santo Iago, were scattered about with their horses in the surrounding ranchos. After long searches, I could only meet with two sorry-looking ponies; and I made up my mind to call upon an old acquaintance, Ignacio

Garcia, who doubtless would procure me horses for the long journey before me.

We had just turned into a very narrow pathway, intersecting a very dense wood, such as the virgin forests of Louisiana, when torrents of rain all of a sudden fell, drenching us to the very marrow, over-flooding the path, and forming pools, in which our horses were more than knee-deep. The wood became thicker and thicker; agavas, nopals, and pitas filled up every interstice between the trees, while the upper branches of the gigantic sycamores bent arch-like over our heads, shooting down from their sturdy folds enormous streamers of green. The storm raged with fury; and made this dome of branches, leaves, and verdure, rustle in a fearful manner. The guide avowed that he had missed his way.

"Let us continue on," I replied, "we may meet some one who will put us on the right path."

Nature is capricious at the tropics. The storm subsided as quickly as it came; and we reached the outskirts of a prairie, over which hung a rainbow of uncommon beauty. The reddish tint of the setting sun gilded the tree tops fantastically; large heavy clouds still rolled along the firmament in wild commotion; whilst the solemn roll of thunder was heard at intervals. A herd of cows and a number of goats were browsing quietly on grass now decked with brilliant diamond drops. They were tended by a horseman perfectly naked. His long shaggy hair, his brownish skin, his gun by his side, gave him a savage and terrible appearance. However, when I asked him if he knew where was the rancho of Don Ignacio Garcia, he made a sign in the affirmative with his head, and simply pointed his finger to the path leading thereto. This

path wound round and round again like a wounded snake in the convulsions of pain, and wriggled right and left among the trees so circuitously, that every instant I had to describe with my bridle semicircles in opposite directions. It was quite enough to give a Hollander the staggers.

After a couple of hours' wandering, I saw a huge rattle-snake curl itself up. My horse startled, plunged to the right, and brought my head against a large branch so violently, that I was unhorsed and rolled to the ground quite senseless. Had I not worn a thick, strong palm-leaf hat, it was not only stunned, but lifeless I should have lain. My horse made off. My guide, who had been some way behind me, carried away likewise by his frightened steed, rode over my body. It was all the work of an instant. I remained in this critical position more than a quarter of an hour. My insensibility over, I resumed my journey on foot, this time praying no blessings on the rattle-snake. About a mile on I met my guide, who, having mastered his horse and retaken mine, was returning to my rescue. I observed an unknown farm which, he said, was the one we were looking out for; but I too well knew there was some mistake, and addressed an old woman who was seated at a cabin door smoking her cigarette.

"Is this," I asked, "the rancho of Don Ignacio Garcia?"

"Yes, but he is gone to the feast."

"Are there many Ignacio Garcias in these parts?"

"Yes, a good many of them." The identity of name caused this mistake.

"Have you any horses?"

"There will be none till after the feast."

"Have you anything for one to eat? I have not tasted food since yesterday."

"No, Señor, I have just eaten the last *tortilla*."

"Could you at least make us a fire?"

"I am sorry I have no firewood — and the maize-straw, which you see in the backyard, is too moist for fuel."

I was so fagged, the night was so dark, and my guide so little to be relied on, that I could not retrace my path. I remained at the rancho and determined on returning to Brownsville through Mexico, being now satisfied that it would not be prudent to travel by impossible roads, at the risk of either being killed or dying of hunger. The soil all around was so saturated with rain, that it resembled a marsh, and the interior of the hut was not much better. Failing a dry spot whereon to lay myself down, I stretched myself on a wretched old cart, while my clothes stuck to my skin; my teeth chattered; and I shivered with cold. Hunger gnawed my entrails in a pitiful way; my joints and limbs were sore and broken with my journey and fall; and with all this, sleep I could not. In spite of all these tortures I was not one whit downcast; I knew God watched over me, and that his angel reckoned my every pain and ache to enter them in the book of life. It was but a very little thing to endure a few trials for Him who died for us on Calvary. Though not too robust in constitution, I have always supported purely physical sufferings with a fair share of fortitude. Unfortunately, moral trials tell much more on my poor organisation, and it is then I specially require aid from above, not to sink or lose heart or confidence.

We were up early, and in the end arrived at Edinburgh without mishap. I returned to Reynosa, where after many a useless search, the parish priest succeeded in procuring for me a wretched little horse, but no guide. I was then obliged to venture alone on my way, without other direction than the stars. The country was flat, but the trees and pasture lands were laid out by nature with a coquettish gracefulness. It was now a forest I had to cross,—now a little prairie, green, or in flowers, encircled by rows of palm trees, ebony, and mesquite trees—now a field of maize, its ears of golden hue, or of sugar-cane with its lanceolated leaves — now a resaca, in which wild ducks, cranes, herons, treated themselves to a bath. The road was wide and well made; but unfortunately, like that from Camargo to Reynosa, of which it was the continuation, it disappeared from time to time beneath the grass. Sometimes it was covered over with underwood — elsewhere cultivated, so that often losing sight of it, I was in danger of missing my way. I cannot say, whether their independence has made the Mexicans more free and happy; but of this there is no doubt, that since Mexico shook off the Spanish yoke, it has done nothing to preserve the roads, and if it does not bestir itself in that direction, international communications will become impossible.

Towards mid-day I saw, at the outskirt of a wood, a hut from which issued a white slender wreath of smoke. I concluded that the people of this house had not gone to the feast of Santo Iago; and as for forty-eight hours I had eaten only a few slices of water melon, an agreeable, but not very nutritious aliment, I approached the door, and knocked. A good old woman was setting about making

a fire for dressing *tortillas* and *tassajo*. I asked her if she could spare me something to eat. She told me she had just then only milk, but that if I waited I could share her dinner. Before accepting the invitation I inquired if the Rancho de la Palma was far distant.

"No, Señor," she said to me; "it is near this."

The Mexicans are not too bright on the subject of distances, and the word *near*, not qualified by a superlative and two or three diminutives, often means "*very far*." But I had yet to acquire this knowledge of the relative value of words; and anxious as I was to arrive as soon as possible at the end of my day's march, I partook of a little milk and resumed my journey.

To the right and left of the road I had remarked for some distance a number of crosses fixed in the earth at certain intervals. My first impression was that they marked the scene of some horrid murder; and herein I only fell into the error so common among travellers who have noticed these crosses in the Mexican territory. I imagined myself in a cut-throat defile, and was prepared every moment to hear the usual formula, "Your purse or your life." Drawing nearer, I observed that several of these crosses bore the name of one and the same person, and the same date of his death. Then reasoning from the premiss that the same person could not be murdered at the same time in different places, I concluded that the crosses marked the spots where the remains had been laid during the funeral procession. I was afterwards confirmed in my judgment by Mexicans well versed in the usages of their country. However, a few of those mark the spot where murder had been perpetrated.

A little before sunset I arrived in my way to Brownsville at the Rancho de la Palma, where were assembled

together numbers of horsemen, some in gala dress, others in rags and squalor. This rancho you might almost call a little town; its population amounts to about a thousand souls. That day, not fewer than three thousand souls met there to celebrate the feast of Santo Iago. Palma has no grand square like the other towns and ranchos of these regions, but it is intersected by a wide and very long street in which the races and dances were held. I sat on the window-sill of the hut where I had put up, and, while waiting dinner, I contemplated the public rejoicings.

The majority of the rancheros were superbly mounted. Their saddles and bridles were mounted with silver, and two of the bridles were themselves of solid silver. After the races the horsemen walked about in large groups, arm in arm, singing to the accompaniment of the mandoline and the accordion, while some amused themselves by taking a woman *en croupe*, and setting off at full gallop to the end of the street, and returning only to change their burthen. Towards evening, however, the horses were tied to the trees of the rancho; lanterns were suspended from the branches; and seats were set out in rectangular forms. The rancheras, divested of their more precious articles of dress and of their mantillas, took their places, while the men formed in rows behind them. Two violins, two clarionets, and a big drum played the fandango, and the ball commenced.

At this moment my dinner was announced, and it consisted of a morsel of kid broiled on the coals; I ate it without sauce, seasoning, or bread; and let me add, without light. Fingers were made before knives and forks, and they had to serve me on this occasion. I endeavoured to shake off the crust of coal and ashes put

on in the process of cooking, but in vain. The whole time of my repast I imagined I was chewing gravel steeped in grease. Dinner over, I dispensed with witnessing the remainder of the festival; and having passed the two preceding nights almost entirely without sleep, I flung my blanket around me, and attempted to sleep in the back yard. But, during the whole night, the *bum-bum* of the big drum, the shrill discordant notes of the clarionet, the roars of merriment, and thundering acclamations of the dancers, kept me from closing an eye.

Next day, the principal inhabitants of the rancho came to beg that I would remain some time among them, to establish a mission; to bless a cemetery; to lay out a chapel; to organise, to baptize, and to marry. But Palma, being in Mexico, was no part of my jurisdiction. I should have the express permission of the ecclesiastical governor of Monterey for this purpose, and this I promised to ask.

This time, being in a condition to continue my journey through Texas, I took with me a guide who could conduct me as far as Galveston, a small rancho on the left bank of the Rio Grande. We had only two tilled fields to cross, so that the journey was without accident. After two hours we were at the banks of the river which our horses had to swim across. I breakfasted with a *Compadre de Bautismo*. Thirty miles from Brownsville, I met, in a small rancho, a Mexican, on his way to Reynosa, and engaged him to take back my horse, while I looked out for another. It was not so easy to find one; and when found he had neither saddle nor bridle. I harnessed him as best I could with cords, and set off at full gallop for Brownsville.

Four rancheros travelled along with me; and their

number increased by the way; and I re-entered Brownsville with an imposing *cortège*, in a very whirlwind of dust. I was browned by the sun; my beard and hair had reached a patriarchal length; and my clothes were all in rags. I was a skeleton from fatigue and hunger, so that no one recognised me. Nevertheless, I was well pleased with the journey, which had informed me of the character and manners of those people quite left to themselves, more numerous than I had imagined, and so sadly bereft of spiritual aids, that along both frontiers I met with not only families, but whole ranchos, which had not seen a priest for twenty or thirty years, to which my arrival was quite an event, and which were astonished to see a missionary act like the rest of men. I formed grand projects for the moral and material improvement of those destitute populations, so well deserving of interest. Alas! projects are more easily made than accomplished.

After my return to Brownsville I fell dangerously ill, and it was with no small joy that I welcomed the arrival of a colleague, sent me by the bishop of Galveston. He was an excellent Irish priest, of exemplary piety and indefatigable zeal. He eased me of part of my burthen; and in his society I found genuine consolation. Unfortunately, he had not youth enough on his side to support with impunity the excesses of the climate. I was often obliged to leave him alone, and go by myself to the more distant ranchos and villages; and as he knew no Spanish, his position in my absence was painful and critical enough. When I lived at Brownsville, my occupations were so multiplied, that sometimes we passed entire days without being able to interchange a word. His health was shattered by these different causes, his

strength declined, and he was obliged to return to Ireland.

Shortly after my return to Brownsville, my colleague was seized with a violent fever, which obliged him to keep his bed. The following Sunday I had to go to officiate and preach at the rancho of Santa Rita, ten miles off, but I returned to the town to sing the high mass and preach again as usual. I could hardly conclude the mass, and intimated to the congregation that a sudden indisposition put it out of my power to give the usual instruction; and I had hardly reached the sacristy, when I became quite unconscious. When consciousness returned, I found myself in my bed, surrounded by some benevolent individuals, who were lavishing attentions on me, while my sick colleague lay in the adjoining room. At this moment, Isidore brought me letters from France. Notwithstanding my weakness, I sprang from the bed to lose no time in seizing them. I took them out of his hands —but, alas! they announced to me the death of three members of my family. For some time the suddenness of the news and grief left me unable to weep. At length, however, nature had her course, and tears in abundance came to my relief. I was seized with a violent fever; and for twelve days I wavered between life and death. A poor young Irishman, named Philip, with affecting self-denial, left his business to help Isidore, and tend myself and my fellow-labourer, who were both confined to bed, and as much dead as alive. Without my knowledge, he called on the sheriff and the authorities of the town, and informed them that there was a fandango near my house, which every evening made a noise sufficient to make me worse, preventing me from sleep, and causing relapse. These gentlemen were

good enough to make the fandango change quarters. On the fifteenth day of my illness I got up to say mass, being now out of danger, but seeming ten years older by my illness. Philip, as if to be out of the way of our gratitude, went off to New Orleans, but I had at least the happiness to see him afterwards in this town. My medical attendant was also an Irishman, and would take no remuneration for his visits and attentions. I believe I was destined to be the spoiled child of all the Irish who came about me. No wonder, then, that this generous and cruelly persecuted nation should have my liveliest sympathies and most grateful affections.

To make things worse, several diseases raged among the female population of the frontiers. At this particular juncture, the duties of my ministry were particularly severe, while my strength was proportionately diminished. My parish, properly so called, radiated thirty or forty miles from Brownsville as a centre, having a population of nearly thirty thousand souls; but I was able to visit the ranchos, towns, and villages beyond the above distance only at stated periods, so that the poor people who died before or after, were necessarily deprived of sacraments. However, I multiplied my journeys as much as I could, and I was often on horseback the whole night, taking hardly time to eat my meals, while sometimes I lost my way.

One morning I was roused very early to administer the last sacraments to one of the best Catholic ladies of Brownsville, Madame Mariquita Garesché, wife of that good artillery officer who on my arrival had offered me his purse, his house, and his best services. I was attached by ties of devoted friendship to those two superior natures, who loved me as a brother. Mr. Jules, as I have said, was originally a Frenchman; and Madame

Mariquita, as I used to call her, had lived a long time in Paris, at the Convent of St. Clotilde. When at Brownsville, I usually sat at the table of my good friends, with whom I had many a conversation about our distant native land. On the occasion of my illness, Madame Garesché bestowed on me all the tender cares of a sister of charity; so that it was with the most profound emotions that I administered the last consolations of religion to this holy soul, full of resignation, who had so often aided me.

I was still by the the bedside of the sufferer, when Isidore came to inform me that I was called away six miles from Brownsville, to the rancho of St. Rosalia, to attend a woman who was dying of hemorrhage. Aware that this disease soon carries off its victims in these regions, I mounted at once the horse that awaited me, and galloped away. When I arrived, I found near the dying, another woman who was forcing milk from her own breasts into a spoon, and putting it to the lips of the patient. The remedy had an effect the reverse of what was expected, for the sufferer died immediately. As a medicinal remedy, the women of the ranchos have an implicit faith in the sanatory properties of "the milk of a Christian woman," as they call it. Unfortunately, experience speaks against them. Much better is the system of Raspail, which is in such vogue in these countries, and applied with such success. I have seen sold at a fabulous price, his "Annual of Health," translated from the Spanish. For sun strokes and apoplexy, sedative water was the only remedy known in these regions. In the ranchos, when one dies, the women weep, set up a bitter cry, tear their hair, strike their breasts with all the marks of grief, which,

whether in earnest or acted, is equally violent. At a
times these noisy manifestations of grief take plac
among a primitive, uncultivated people. I witnesse
this scene for the first time at Rosalia; and was alarme
and moved by it; but I escaped with all speed, having t
assist at the interment of a converted Jew.

On my return to Brownsville, I performed th
obsequies. Having reached the cemetery, we wer
assailed by one of those sudden storms which th
tropics alone are able to engender. In an instant w
were wet through. The soil was so softened by th
unexpected deluge, that the brink of the grave fell i
where I was reciting the prayers for the dead, an
myself, and eight or ten others besides, fell over th
coffin, and were half buried with the dead. But w
escaped with sprains, a few bruises, and a coating c
yellow mud upon our garments.

During this time, the streets were metamorphose
into as many little rivers, which I had to cross on foo
The storm ceased as quickly as it had begun; th
sun shone forth in all his radiant splendour; and o
arriving at the presbytery, I found two horses saddle
ready, waiting for me, with a guide, who begged of m
to go with him without a moment's delay to attend tw
women, who were dying in a rancho thirty-two mile
from Brownsville. He added, that in order to trave
more quickly, he had left, half way, two other horse
as a relay.

There was no time for hesitation, and I did not eve
wait to breakfast, but changed my wet cassock for m
coat, clapped my palm-branch hat well down on m
head, to guard against the burning sun, and set off a
a gallop. Having galloped for an hour and a hal

we exchanged our jaded horses for the relay awaiting us, and pursued our journey at a similar pace. I did not at the time perceive the error of my not having breakfasted; but now I felt very weak and unwell, and had distressing heaviness of stomach; my clothes were wet, not now with rain, but the perspiration that flowed abundantly from me in large tepid drops The heavens seemed on fire—the atmosphere in flames. It was the end of August, at the height of the raging heat, and the sun, with a serene, majestic self-complacency, sent down on our devoted heads his perpendicular rays. We crossed a great resaca, where the carburetted hydrogen that escaped from the earth disturbed the air like the fluttering flame of a candle, to a height of twenty or twenty-five feet. We felt as if we were passing through the midst of a raging furnace.

When I arrived at the hut where one of the patients lay ill, I was little better than herself, and I fainted before I could be kept from falling. To restore my consciousness I was abundantly sprinkled with cold water; but by the fall I got an enormous lump on my forehead. Having administered the last sacraments to the dying woman, I was about proceeding to discharge the same office for the other, when I became unconscious a second time. Fortunately my paleness and faltering gait plainly gave warning of my suffering condition, and I walked arm-in-arm with the rancheros who accompanied me. While the fainting fit continued I had to undergo a second sprinkling. Truly was I destined to spend my journey in a cold or tepid bath. My ministrations ended, I took a cup of coffee, but had not strength enough to eat anything, and I made the best of my way to Brownsville, where my presence was necessary.

But my journey was not to end here. Having come as far as the thicket that connects the rancho of Santa Rita with Brownsville, and, on account of the frequent murders committed there, called "*cut-throat*," I found a Mexican who had been for several hours waiting there for me to go to a rancho on the banks of the Rio Grande, where my ministry was needed. This fine fellow had been in Brownsville to look for me. Isidore informed him of my whereabouts, and he came to plant himself directly in my way. He tied his horse to a tree, and continued smoking cigarettes while waiting for me. I then turned off from my path and followed my new guide. We struck into the thick of a wood, itself exceedingly dense, and consisting exclusively of enormous ebony trees of richest odour, and of mesquite trees. On the evening previous, I had assisted in this very place, at the removal of the body of an American, who had been murdered in a mysterious manner. One of his friends proposed a post-mortem examination, with the view of finding some clue to the authors of the deed, and I was present at the operation, which took place just before the interment. The deceased received a ball from the very muzzle of a gun, right through the heart. In his breast was found the wadding, but beyond this, no more information could be gleaned of the murderer.

We even passed beneath the tree where he had fallen. The path was quite narrow, the trees were smothered with foliage, and the underwood thickly set. The shades of night were beginning to fall on this savage spot, so solitary and ill-famed. The plaintive coo of the turtle-dove was the only sound that, at certain intervals, broke the dismal stillness. Night—silence—solitude—the cry of the bird—all this inspired an undefined

dread which could not be explained. I felt sad and uneasy. From self-love, I suppose, I attributed this state of mind to hunger, weakness, and fatigue. At length, however, we arrived at our destination.

I found an old woman stretched on a buffalo skin. She had been scalded all over with boiling water, and was dying in the most excruciating tortures. To give her some ease, her neighbours had covered her all over with *nopal* dust or scrapings, — an effectual mollifiant, and much in use in these countries. Poor soul! the joy of seeing the minister of God made her forget for the moment her torture. Being unable to cure her, I whispered words of consolation into her suffering heart. I spoke to her of the dolorous passion of the Son of God — of Him who said, "Blessed are they who weep, for they shall be comforted."

I spoke with profound feeling, for I could never be unmoved witnessing the sufferings of others; yet I have seen so much suffering, that my heart might well have been hardened. But some natures it is hard to change. As I was quitting this poor woman, she squeezed my hand in grateful acknowledgment, and appeared more calm and resigned. For my part, I was more stricken down than herself; and I no longer thought of my fatigues.

The guide who was to escort me to Brownsville was not the same who had conducted me, so that this was the third guide I had in the course of my journey. I really quaked with fear, as I saw him sharpening an enormous dirk, which he fastened at his side. In my eyes he had all the air of an arrant, finished bandit. I might well fear; but it was neither fit nor prudent to manifest my apprehensions; and so I kept behind him as far as I could. We had travelled a certain distance

when I heard the branches sending forth a crackling sound before us. My guide seemed to take no notice of this noise; but, as in these regions distrust may become a virtue, I called upon my guide to halt and listen if he heard anything, for in the pitchy darkness to see anything was simply impossible. In reality, we heard the approach of some one in the underwood.

"Who goes there?" cried my guide.

"A friend," was the answer.

"All right," he rejoined. And continued his course. But this answer by no means reassured me; for I would rather have met a panther than a man at such an hour, in such a place.

Hence, I cried out to my guide, "How now, you wretch! you say all right, while I think, on the contrary, it is *all wrong*. Do you know with whom you have to deal?"

"Oh! Señor curé," he replied, "fear not; I have recognised the voice of Don Antonio. He is a good Christian."

I knew nothing in the world about Don Antonio; but as he passed me by, I observed this good Christian, who seemed to me a bad character in rags. Appearances, however, often deceive, and I said, "Good night" to Don Antonio, who, on his part, wished me a thousand blessings. It was near midnight by the time I arrived at Brownsville. In mind, as in body, I was truly in a pitiable condition, but I retired to rest without taking any nourishment.

Seldom passed a week not characterised by a succession of similar occurrences, which kept me a whole day or a night, or both sometimes, on horseback, in fair weather and foul. I soon felt that such a life could not

last long, that my strength gave the lie to my wishes, and that my stay in this mission would be short indeed. Yet I found it impossible to act otherwise, for I could not in conscience make up my mind to neglect the instruction of those poor people that I loved so much, to allow so many poor souls to depart unaided in distant ranchos, souls that called on me to reconcile them to God, and open their path to heaven. Thus, notwithstanding my wretched health, never quite restored since my departure from Castroville, I determined on pursuing this exhausting course, while strength lasted to keep me on the saddle or at the sacred altar.

Sorrow and sadness just at this moment fell to my lot. My cherished Jules (Mr. Garesché) left for the United States. In the friendship of this pious Christian, so full of lively faith, I found much encouragement and consolation. His conversation was full of unction, and engaging beyond expression. Solitude has always been to me a sombre veil, spreading darkness and bitterness over my thoughts. Oftentimes the best constituted and most devoted natures require to attach themselves to something sensible, in order to shake off the lassitude of the soul. The mind cannot be always on the stretch, as it soon wears itself out. When you return from a long weary journey, the soul feels sad from the sufferings which it has aided to console, — the body is weighed down by privations that it cannot escape. At this moment the flower which you love, whose growth you watch, and which you water with due care morning and evening — the bird that warbles its joyous song on your gable — the faithful dog that watches your return with plantive whining, are not enough to drive away this natural melancholy brought on by

solitude. I was, therefore, deeply attached to this holy couple, tried so much by sickness. Twice was Madame Garesché brought to the brink of the grave; and twice did she escape, contrary to all the expectations of professional skill.

During our hours of freedom, Mr. Jules and his wife used to come and pass some time beneath the porch of my cottage. To the happiness of speaking my mother-tongue, while breathing the pure temperate air, embalmed with the fragrance of tropical nights, was added the advantage of drawing from the fountain head important information, regarding the countries which Mr. Jules had for a long time inhabited. At my age, these conversations had still for me the charm which the outpourings of friendship bestow upon those in whom years, evils, and experience have not weakened, and destroyed one by one their dearest illusions. My burthen was often enough rather heavy for shoulders so young; and sometimes God allowed me to fall into faint-heartedness, as if to show that He alone is the Consoler supreme, the Master of all hearts, and that in Him alone I ought to place all my confidence, from Him draw all my strength. Unfortunately, in the midst of trials, my eyes were not always turned towards heaven. Sometimes they sought the earth, to find there a support. I found in it the pious hand of this friend, and seized it with all the energy of which I was capable. These evening entertainments were a kind of antidote against this singular lowness of spirit, the offspring of solitude, which I could not shake off. In the heart of my dear Jules I found strength and courage, which Providence seemed to deny me, to make my labour more meritorious.

I have never imagined that the priesthood was a mechanism, which was to work coldly and regularly like a clock. Charity and love of human kind ought to be the moving springs of action with a priest. Such are often the tests of success in the apostolical ministry. St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis de Sales, St. Vincent de Paul, and so many other apostles of human nature, have converted whole nations, by pouring into their words and actions the treasures of charity, that glowed in the focus of their own ardent bosoms. A priest who would act differently from these illustrious models would preach to a desert, he would beat the air, and his ministry would be void. But if charity of the heart is the principle of zeal, it is also the source of a thousand miseries to him who attaches himself too much to the people whom he evangelises. To keep up this sacred fire of charity, and direct it to the greater glory of God and the profit of our fellow men, a strength is required which is found only at the foot of the crucifix. That encouragement is required, which is found chiefly in the perusal of the history of apostolical men, and in the devotedness of a pious affection.

Jules had been, then, to me one of those beings whose parting leaves in the soul a void hard to be filled up. The day of his departure arrived. I embraced him in a flood of tears, and parted, never to see him more. His pious consort, yet hardly over the effects of her late illness, accompanied him. She was anxious to go and pray over the tomb of her two children who died in the cradle, and were interred in the church, but was prevented by unforeseen circumstances. At the moment of parting, she made me promise to discharge this pious duty for her by proxy.

Sadly did I enter my house, to be cheered no longer by the visits of my friends. As night came I went to the chapel, feebly lighted by the pale ray of the moon. The breeze was hushed; the birds slept in their nests; all nature was plunged in profound silence; while I directed my steps towards the tomb of the two little angels, to fulfil my promise. Alas! It is only mothers who can weep over the bliss of their little ones, while their innocent souls enjoy an eternal happiness in heaven. Poor mother! she need not visit those two tombs over which I knelt in prayer, and which so often witnessed her prayers and moans. I could not pray for the angels whose bliss was secure; but I did pray for all mothers whose blind tenderness for their children is often cruel in its results — fatal tenderness, which fills the world with misery, and inundates it with vice. Thus did I discharge that debt of maternal piety. Tears bedewed my cheek; for I remembered that in France, I too had cherished tombs, on which, perhaps, I should never leave the impress of my knee. I remained a good while, my head resting on my hand, my eyes turned towards the altar, plunged in an abyss of reflections, each sadder than the other. I had a friend, and God was pleased to take him from me. Thereby, no doubt, He wished to disengage me from all those earthly comforts on which I loved too much to lean.

Since, henceforth, God was to be my only guide and support, I prayed Him with fervour not to abandon me. When I returned to my room, though still dejected, I was, however, calm and resigned, I bethought me of that incalculable amount of suffering that is spread over the earth, and which a prayer, a look towards heaven, renders so light.

CHAP. VI.

EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS. — ADVENTURES OF A EUROPEAN. — DERANGEMENT OF A CREOLE. — THE SECT OF THE VAUDOUX. — DANCE IN THE MIDST OF SERPENTS. — SORCERIES. — THE PIONEER. — PASSION FOR GAMBLING. — HISTORY OF MY GUIDE. — THE HONEY ANTS. — WONDERFUL GROTTA. — SECRET OF THE THREE LEAVES. — HUMAN SACRIFICES OF THE ANCIENT MEXICANS. — A VILLAGE SAVANT. — AN OPEN AIR MASS. — THE HEN AND THE CHICKENS. — AN UNPARALLELED DESOLATION. — THE RECEIVER-GENERAL OF BROWNSVILLE.

In my conversations with the rancheros, I perceived that the want of a religious education made their mind the slave of superstition, and that there was nothing which appeared somewhat singular, that was not to them something marvellous and supernatural. Whatever wore the semblance of mystery, whatever was the result of adroit or secret manipulations, filled them with astonishment and awe. They were content to believe that surprising things were inexplicable, without making the smallest effort to divine the cause, often so easy of access. I can, however, urge in apology, that in these vast countries, imperfectly explored and badly governed, you meet, at almost every step, strange and extraordinary occurrences. Some proceed from the clever mischief of man; some are the phenomena of nature; some the offshoot of the ancient idolatry.

A European living at Matamoros had seduced a Mexican young woman, under promise of marriage; but at the moment of the marriage ceremony he began to hesitate,

and ended by retracting his engagement. The girl's parents manifested no symptoms of resentment, but to all appearance, they continued their social relations with the seducer, who was soon persuaded that all was forgiven. One day, however, he was invited to dine; and after dinner, giddiness, accompanied by violent headache, seized him. He cried out that he was poisoned, escaped, and made the best of his way to fling himself into the Rio Grande, opposite Brownsville. At this point there are always passers by, promenaders, and barilleros. He was rescued from the water, — his life was saved, but his reason was gone. Picked up by a Frenchman, and conveyed home, he filled the house with cries of terror. Every one who met his eye was a poisoner. He refused to take any nourishment; he got away; flung himself once more into the river, and was once more rescued. It was then that a coloured woman, who had lived a long time in Louisiana, declared that this derangement presented all the features of that which proceeds from the absorption of liquids, drugs, or perfumes, known only to the sect of the Vaudoux. She told how her mother became suddenly deranged after visiting the house of a Vaudoux; and declared, with confidence, that if the unfortunate could be prevailed upon to contract the promised marriage, his derangement would cease. The result verified the prediction; for after a visit paid by the young man, in a lucid interval, at the house of the young woman's parents, his reason came back, and the marriage was celebrated.

This singular fact, which came under my own eyes, recalled to my mind that I had seen, in a steam-boat, a lithograph representing a Vaudoux dance. It represented negroes, coloured people, and whites of both

sexes, entirely naked, forming a circle by joining hands and gambolling joyfully in the midst of a number of serpents, that entwined themselves about their limbs without doing them any harm. Seizing the opportunity of learning something about this singular sect, the immorality of which surpasses even that of Mormonism, and whose mysterious power is displayed in deadly results, I made inquiries of this woman herself, a native of Louisiana, where the Vaudoux were very numerous.

"One day," she said to me, "my mother received a note requesting her presence at midnight in a certain house on business of serious importance. The signature seemed so authentic, that my mother made up her mind to go. She durst not inform either her two children or her negress of her intentions; but the negress observing the sadness and anxiety impressed on my mother's features during the perusal of the note, was curious to learn the reason of it. Not attempting any questions, she waited for her departure to take the note out of my mother's pocket, and asked me to read it aloud. The contents had nothing extraordinary in them; but as I read the address of the house, the negress exclaimed, 'Oh! missus, a great evil may perhaps happen, your mother is in the house of a Vaudoux.' I went out at once with the negress; and we found the house, which was only one story high, having merely a ground floor. As the door was unlocked, we entered. Alas! sir, my mother lay senseless on the boards in the middle of a triple circle of black ashes. An individual, veiled in black, left the room by a back door at the moment of our entrance. What had occurred, I have never learned. I took my mother in my arms, and, assisted by the negress, carried

her out into the street. The freshness of the night restored her to consciousness; but she had lost her reason, which she never after recovered."

The sect of the Vaudoux, originally from Africa, as it would seem, is widely spread among the negroes of the United States and the Antilles. What is its veritable end and object? It is hard to say: but this is certain, that its springs of action are self-interest, cupidity, and vengeance. They possess important secrets respecting the properties of certain plants, more or less unknown. They make perfumes or poisons, the effects of which are widely different; one kind killing by degrees, another like the thunderbolt; while some attack reason in different degrees, or destroy it altogether. They are also in possession of peculiar antidotes. A large number of Creoles, of whites, and of coloured people belong to this sect; and some of them even occupy a high position in the society.

The investigation of the mysteries of the Vaudoux would be a curious study, but it is as difficult as it is dangerous a task to interfere in their concerns. I was told the following, regarding some of their ceremonies, as they are often celebrated at New Orleans, at the Suburb Trémé, in an isolated house, surrounded by a fence of boards, and only one story high. One room composed nearly the whole house. At the further end of it, towards the east, was raised an altar covered over with red woollen cloth. This altar was hollow, and filled inside with rattle-snakes, congos, and other venomous reptiles, which would crawl out during the dance, glide about the room, and entwine themselves about the persons of the dancers. The Vaudoux undress, without doubt, in a closet on the ground floor, for they enter

quite naked by the door to the left of the altar. There they join hands and form a ring, while a negro takes his post in the centre, burns in a perfuming pan a substance that diffuses a thick white smoke through the room, stoops to the floor, perhaps to trace certain cabalistic figures, takes five serpents off the altar, and folds them round his neck and limbs. The ring then puts itself in motion; and the whole company, including the negro, twist and jump about for a considerable time. At length the lights are put out, and the noise ceases as darkness comes on.

This sect inspires such terror into the coloured population and the negroes who belong to it, that you cannot get them to procure personal and direct information regarding these mysterious practices. What they say about them is so extraordinary, that no reliance can be placed in it. I have frequently seen at New Orleans in the sequestered streets of the Suburb Trémé, boxes of tinned iron full of oil, and containing a square-cut stove, the size of which varies with the box. They were placed at nightfall on the window-sills, but it was long before I could get any person to explain to me the reason for the boxes being there. No one remarked them; and it was only during the latter days of my stay at Texas that I found them out to be specifics against the witchery of the Vaudoux. However, they are not numerous in Texas, and their sect is unnoticed there, except when any singular occurrence, such as the passing derangement of the European of Matamoros, suddenly recalls its existence. What struck me most was the indifference of the American police regarding the Vaudoux, an indifference common to all parts in which this sect is found. The police, however, know how to

deal with facts, which, secret though they be, are not entirely beyond their jurisdiction. Why do they tolerate these orgies, these arbitrary and cruel acts? Are they themselves afraid of the Vaudoux?

But if the Vaudoux are few in Texas, it is not so with another class of a similar stamp, I mean witches, who show their heads in the frontier ranchos of Texas and Mexico. Hardly a week passes without poor people having to complain of some wickedness practised on themselves, their lands, or their cattle. The witch the most feared and famous among the rancheros, lived at Ramireno, three miles from Brownsville. From her knowledge of the magnetic passes and the properties of herbs she used to astonish the poor Mexicans by her charms and cures, or else alarm them by her mischievous arts. She was held in mysterious respect, mingled with awe. I essayed to diminish her influence over the weak imaginations of the rancheros by explaining to them the means used for their deception; but I could never succeed. Facts were more powerful than words. The simplest remedy was to advise them to keep away from the company of the sorceress, to have nothing to do with her, to live as good Christians; calling to their memory, "If God is for us, who shall be against us?" At the same time I demanded of the witch to change her trade, threatening, in case she did any mischief, to have an inquiry. In the country parts of the Texan frontiers, there are traditions or stories rife about the secrets of natural history; and you learn astonishing things, which it would be as unreasonable to deny without proof, as to admit without examination. In the course of the November of 1851, I proceeded, under the guidance of a *péon* (a kind of white slave), to a rancho where a poor

woman was about to expire; but having a marriage and several baptisms to perform in another rancho not far distant, I took along with me the vestments and other necessaries for the holy mass.

These péons are nearly all reduced to slavery by misery, idleness, or gambling. Their servitude is not hereditary, and seldom even endures for life. The péon engages his services for a certain number of years, during which he is to labour on the land, to tend the cattle and deliver the messages of his master. On the other hand, the master is bound to supply his wants, and even sometimes gives him a small salary. In the countries that I have lived in, the condition of the white slave is by no means wretched; it is quite different from that of the niggers in the United States. In general, the péon eats with his master and is almost similarly clad; and it is hard at first sight to distinguish the one from the other. He enjoys much liberty and labours little. It is principally gambling that multiplies the péons.

My conductor was a humorous, poetic, story-telling kind of fellow. He sang a good many love ditties of his own composition, and when tired of singing he recited some mystic verses, a few of which attracted my attention. I asked him what he was reciting.

"It is my Christmas part."

"What part?"

"Ah! true, Señor, you do not yet know all our customs."

"Well, for Christmas Eve we represent at the rancho the birth of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, as is usual in a good many villages of Mexico. Three rancheros act the part of the 'wise men,' and I am one of them.

Others are shepherds, and sing hymns to the accompaniment of the mandoline. The youngest and handsomest rancheros are the angels and intone the anthems."

He went on for half an hour giving the detail of the ceremony. It was not without pleasure that 9000 miles from France, I found the representation of mysteries once so common in Europe.

While we thus chatted, we reached the banks of a large resaca of limpid transparence. It formed an oval regularly-shaped lake, skirted, as though by a framework, with palm trees, ebony trees, cedars, green oaks, and sycamores; while the wild vines connected one with the other by their graceful garlands, and a verdant slope adorned with fern and flowers, trended from the foot of the trees to the water's edge. A multitude of water fowls gambolled beneath. In the distance we saw stags and tawny animals slaking their thirst. In the midst of the lake was a woody island. A cloudless, azure sky completed this picture so full of charm and poetry. I was enchanted with the spectacle, and communicated my feelings to my péon.

"Oh!" said he, "if you went in the direction of the Red River, you would see sights more beautiful than this."

"There is, then, a Red River near this place?"

"Yes, it is very curious, especially at the Paso del Gigante. It is a ford, that gets its name on account of the bones of giants buried there. I have seen bones twelve or fourteen feet in length, but all that have appeared have been carried off, and the earth is so hard that the pickaxe cannot enter it. However, if the curiosities of the country have any interest for you, I can relate to you extraordinary stories, for Don Ignacio Garcia

has travelled a good deal in the solitary valleys, and learned a good deal which his fellow countrymen knew nothing about."

"And who is this Don Ignacio Garcia?"

"Ha! Señor Don Emmanuel, you don't see that it is I myself?"

"Well, Señor Don Ignacio Garcia, you have seen in my house serpents and living animals, and minerals enough to be assured that I have a fancy for curiosities. Do me then the pleasure of relating your travels and discoveries."

"With great pleasure, but on one condition: that you keep the secret while in the Mexican frontiers."

"I promise you."

"First of all, I swear that every word I tell you is as true, as it is that our Lady, Doña Guadalupe, is patroness of Mexico."

"I have no doubt: but commence."

"There is," begins gravely, Don Ignacio, "in the state of Tomaulipos a valley little known, where are found ants of an enormous size, which make honey; and their honey is still sweeter than the honey of the wild bee, which, however, is the sweetest of all. They seem half buried in the earth, while others of the same family feed them while they are making the honey. This honey is formed in a vesicle adhering to the ant, and when the vesicle is full the ant dies."

Here I interrupted Don Ignacio, for the purpose of telling him that I had seen at Matamoros, an American *gentleman*, named Langstroth, who preserved in a glass vessel a few of these vesicles. They are about the size and shape of a raisin-grain. The honey has

the colour and transparence of a beautiful topaz of Brazil. As to the ant, it resembles the ordinary ant, and there it remains in the vesicle as though buried in its own work. I asked for some details about its reproduction, but the existence of this insect is so little known that I could never succeed in obtaining any further information about it.

Don Ignacio, however, had promised me unexpected revelations. Seeing that I knew as much about the ant as himself, he began to think awhile, and started a new topic, in which I did not interrupt him.

"Ten years ago (it was then I herded the flocks of Doña Trinidad Flores), as I was pursuing a mustang, I penetrated into a very narrow gorge of the State of Nuevo Leon. To the right and to the left I saw only rocks and crags heaped up in confusion, as though the mountain had fallen in. I observed nothing in the shape of a tree beyond a plaquemine, a kind of medlar tree, which grew up in this chaos. I wished to draw near it, to rest beneath its shade and eat some of its black sweet fruit. In climbing up a slope, I caused some stones covered over by the moss to roll down, and, in their displacement, they laid bare the mouth of a deep grotta. I determined on entering; but, at a distance of twenty paces, I was brought to a halt by a wall, which, from feeling it, I found had not been built with lime and mortar, so that in less than five minutes I had it all down, and there opened before me a large lofty room lighted by a fissure in the rock. At the furthest extremity rose a square altar made of polished stones, the uppermost consisting of one solid block. On the altar lay a piece of pure, massive gold, oblong in form, a foot long by two inches wide, while over the

altar stood out in relief against the wall, a frightful grimacing figure made of red clay. The body was covered with a bundle of maize-straw, in which were set seven pins of gold, and several silver leaves tarnished by time. Near the figure was to be seen a garment decorated with red, yellow, and blue feathers, and in form resembling the chasuble of our priests. At such a sight I stood amazed, not knowing what to do. I soon recovered, however, and folded the piece of gold in my handkerchief, put the seven pins in my pocket, leaving the silver leaves untouched, as being too slender to have much value. I closed with care both entrances to the grotta, and returned to the rancho of Doña Trinidad, which was a good way from me. Before reaching it, I buried my treasure in a private spot. I sold part of it at Monterey, purchased my freedom, and went to San Luis de Potosi to dispose of the rest. Although the goldsmith robbed me, without a doubt, I still got out of him two talagres of gold.*

"I had now wherewith to purchase a pretty rancho, to cultivate it and grow rich, but I was fond of gambling and roving, and could not settle down. After sending my mother, who lived at Tula, three talagres of silver, I bought a splendid horse, with bridle and saddle all mounted with silver, and made an excursion to Puebla, Mexico, and Guadalajara. I played a good deal wherever I went, and got on so well, that in twelve months I was almost penniless. It then occurred to me to go and visit my mother. I retraced my steps, and before crossing the State of Zacataca, I halted at

* The talagre is a measure equal to a thousand large pieces; and of gold it is worth 16,000 piastres (960*l.*); of silver, 1000 piastres (200*l.*)

Saltillo, in the house of one of my co-godfathers, called Medina, whose mother was an Indian.

"Medina was old and sickly, and one day taking me aside he said to me, 'Don Ignacio, I mean to confide to you a secret, known only to two Indians and myself. As it ought to become the benefice of one alone, none of us made any use of it; but I fear the Indians may divulge it before they quit the world. I am sick and childish, and shall intrust it to you. Should you mean to make any use of it, you will see what precautions are required. Without them you run a great risk. Let us saddle our horses, and I shall tell you forthwith.'

"We left for the mountain district, and went at a cantering pace the whole way. Having rested in the evening, we resumed our journey at night, 'For,' said my comrade, 'we must not be seen by either of the Indians, who live near the spot for which we are making.' In the midst of the darkness we gained the entrance of a narrow valley. The horses were left here, and we began to ascend a craggy little hill, on which, despite of the darkness, I distinguished nepals and pitas. We had been clambering a quarter of an hour, when my co-father halted, plucked three leaves from three plants of the same kind, and said, 'Take those three leaves, Don Ignacio; keep them carefully. When they are dry, grind and put them into a crucible; their very presence instantly separates gold and silver from every alloy.' I put the leaves carefully in my breast pocket, fully impressed with the importance of the secret, and we returned to Saltillo. I impressed on my memory certain marks to distinguish this favoured valley, and at daylight I stealthily eyed the three leaves. I had never seen similar ones before.

They were long, like tobacco leaves, much of the same shape, and covered with a white down, that made them to the touch as soft as velvet.

"To turn this discovery to account, I betook myself to the silver mines of Guanajuato, in the mountains bordering on Mexico. I applied to one of the richest proprietors of the mines, a man of acknowledged probity, and I offered him my secret, and to conduct him to the lucky spot for four talagres of gold. He consented, but on condition of making a previous experiment with the three leaves that I had with me. The experiment succeeded beyond our hopes. The use of a process so simple would be attended with a vast saving in the working of mines; so that, without a day's delay, the proprietor and myself set off for Saltillo. We entered at night, not to awake the attention of my co-father. I found the valley; but imagine my disappointment at not discovering a single leaf of the kind we sought after. We traversed the valley in every direction—all in vain—yet there it was. In several points the earth seemed to have been lately dug up. What made the plants disappear I have never learned. So we had to retrace our steps, downcast and crestfallen. The proprietor was sorry enough not to have kept one of the leaves, to send it to a Mexican botanist, in order to learn its name and where it might be found.

"As to myself, with the little money that remained to me I bought some oxen and two carts, for conveying goods from Matamoros to Monterey. Unfortunately, by degrees I lost gains, carts, and oxen at play, and became a barillero at Brownsville, then péon. At present I am master of the unfortunate passion, but I conduct myself well, and work a good deal. My master is going

to grant me my liberty, and to give me in marriage one of his daughters, for whom I have a fancy. I shall live quietly at the rancho, and I promise you to build a chapel and open a cemetery."

"These are good resolutions," I observed, "let us only hope they may be lasting, and that industrious and prudent courses may bring you a fortune as large as you met with by chance and lost by dissipation. As to your grotta, I heard an ecclesiastic of Guadalajara, whom I met at Matamoros, recount an adventure that bore a striking resemblance to that of your story. These, with other data, make me believe that the ancient Mexicans did not confine themselves to the public celebration of human sacrifices on those immense truncated pyramids, those colossal temples, the majestic ruins of which are still to be met with. The Indians had, besides, particular sacrifices offered up in secluded and mysterious spots, such as you happened to meet with.

"Indeed, Spanish historians, of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, inform us that in several regions of the West Indies the natives adored local deities in solitary spots and grottas, and that they sacrificed also on the mountains. The Indians of the island of Cuba used to perform pilgrimages to a cavern called Loaboma, in which they adored two divinities, of the name Maroba and Bintatel. They offered fruits, flowers, gold, pearls, and animals. In the same island in the desert was another idol, of the name Conocotto, famous for his extraordinary adventures, his invisible travels, and the dangers which he had escaped by miracle. The Cacique Guamarea held this idol in such veneration that he offered sacrifice to it daily.

"Every year the Tlaxcanallians used to offer a human sacrifice on the mountain in order to obtain a good crop. They would wait until the maize had got a foot above ground, which used to be in the month of March. They then took a boy and girl, three years old, the children of free parents, in the vicinity of the town, brought them in procession to a mountain, and immolated them to the god Tlaloc. The hearts were not torn out, as was the custom in other sacrifices, but the heads were cut off, and the bodies buried with new winding sheets. This month of March, which was the first month of the year among the Tlaxcanallians, was specially devoted to sacrifice, in order to draw down the protection of the gods. On the last day of the month, called Tlaxcaxi-penaliztli, the Tlaxcanallians offered sacrifice to their favourite god, Camaxtle, the victims being a hundred slaves. The victims were laid on their backs on a raised stone at the top of the temple, and the priests opened their breasts with a flint or obsidienne * knife, tore out the heart, placed it at the foot of the altar, and besmeared the idols with the reeking blood of the victims. A score of them were then flayed, and their blood-stained skins were bestowed on as many famous warriors, who put them on forthwith. The idols were usually made of marble, jasper, baked earth, gold, or silver; sometimes composed of divers substances, and ornamented with the precious metals. There were some, a mixture of maize and honey, or all kinds of Mexican seeds kneaded in the blood of boys and girls. When the temples and idols were being demolished by the Spaniards, after the conquest of Fernand Cortez,

* A greenish transparent stone of volcanic origin.

several divinities of smaller dimensions were concealed by the Indians in the caves and woods, or else buried in the earth.

"The amount of heads and statuettes of baked earthenware that you meet with everywhere, proves that the greater part of the great tribes that constituted the Mexican empire had their household gods. These little divinities were generally sent to the priests, who deposited them in the temples, that they might be sprinkled with human gore, and thus blessed after their manner. The priests had also other small figures, which they distributed among pilgrims. Numbers of those figures are found at the base of large temples, and especially at San Juan-de-Teotihuacan. The Spaniards, in course of time, forced the Mexicans to give up all these little idols, for the sake of the precious metals that either ornamented or constituted the greater part of them. Still a large quantity must remain in sequestered places.

"The tools used by the Mexicans, as well for sacrifice as for private purposes, were of wrought bronze, which was a good substitute for steel, or else of obsidienne. The silver mines most easily worked and favoured by climate are those of Guanajuato, which are very rich. Before the discovery of the *cold process* (*amalgamation à froid*), a process whereby the poorest mineral is made to yield its metal without the application of fire, and which is due to a Mexican of the name Medina, the silver mines of Mexico had not been much worked, for want of wood or other fuel in the neighbourhood of the mines.

"The sacerdotal garment found in the cave, proves the truth of the statements made by Spanish his-

torians, that the ancient Mexican priests wore vestments bearing a resemblance, in shape, to the vestments of the Catholic priest. In a work of Gonzalez Ferdinandez de Oviedo, on the voyages and conquests of Fernand Cortez, which was translated into French, and published, I believe, at Amsterdam, in 1588, we read that among the presents received by Cortez from Montezuma there were—'surplices and vestments of idolatrous priests, copes, frontals, and hangings of temples and altars.'

"To be brief, those singular stories have the sad effect of keeping alive superstition and the love of the marvellous among this indolent people, plunged, as they are, in the deepest ignorance. I met in the ranchos only one would-be *savant*. He was small in stature, dressed in black, with a low, round hat on his head, giving him the air of a village schoolmaster. He had a high opinion of himself, and never doubted about the extent of his knowledge, as he knew some old French books, that he thought were Latin. He told me, with pride, that he had the Theology of St. Thomas, the apostle. Having no wish to lower him in the estimation of the people who were present, by telling him that the apostle and the theologian were quite distinct personages, I only asked him for the book. He brought me a French medical treatise entitled the *Summa Theologica*. Still the good soul seemed in earnest, and imagined he knew what he could not read."

At length we reached the rancho where I was expected. I administered extreme unction to the dying woman, who had not seen a priest for sixty years; and, after partaking of a tortilla steeped in coffee made out of burnt maize, I took my seat on a wooden

bench, under an old oak tree. The proprietor of the rancho sat by my side, with about thirty rancheros, of every age and sex, squatted around us. The cigarette was lit, and we began to talk about the improvements to be made in the village, and its future. Some related personal adventures, more or less interesting, and I talked to them of France, of her power, her agriculture, her army, her civil and religious institutions, and her old cathedrals. Railways, and especially electric telegraphs, were to them wonders incomprehensible. They were so on the tip-toe of attention that we prolonged the conversation till far in the night, without perceiving it. At last, however, we separated, with many hearty shake-hands and good-nights mutually bestowed, and slept soundly on the grass, here and there, with our bed-clothes round us.

Next morning, I repeated my breviary on the banks of the Rio Grande. This over, I took a little bell and went about the outskirts of the rancho ringing it, to call the people to mass, where I had prepared at the foot of a large sycamore tree an altar, consisting of two meal tubs, over which I placed a hut door. Two bottles, covered with moss, supplied me in the place of candlesticks, and I hung my crucifix against a tree, around which I had drawn hangings, tent-shape, of muslin mantillas and shawls. My rustic altar had an aspect at once graceful and picturesque. After my third summons, the rancheros arrived in crowds and in their gala dress. Some had come a long way, having previous knowledge of my arrival. At the moment of vesting I found that I had forgotten the alb at Brownsville. What was I to do? In the rancho there was no white stuff that might be rendered available. After long and useless

searches, I recollected having seen a hut whose ceiling consisted of a piece of unbleached calico. Cutting it into the form of an alb was the work of a moment, and I commenced the holy sacrifice in the midst of the most profound contemplation.

The rancheros were kneeling on the grass round the altar, and shaded by the sycamore leaves. After the gospel, I turned round towards my audience as usual, and began to preach on the parable of the husbandman, who sowed seed in his land. At this moment, I could not refrain from admiring the picture that opened before my eyes. This motley crowd, all silent, squatted in oriental fashion on the green grass; this young stranger who announced to them the word of God; this altar, so simple and so fresh beneath a dome of nature's verdure in the midst of a vast country; the sun gilding with glory this richly fertile plain; the birds singing their most joyous notes; all produced within me a feeling of poesy and happiness that I would not exchange for the most noisy joys of the heart.

After speaking for a quarter of an hour, I stopped for a few moments to wipe away the perspiration that flowed down my face — for, far advanced though the season was, it was still very hot. During this respite an old man, an octogenarian and more, bald and venerable in appearance, continued the discourse.

"Once upon a time," said he, "there was a hen which had twelve chickens that never left her side, and three more that rambled away from her. The hen did all she could to support her brood; but the land was sterile, and there was no grain. One day a hawk that was in search of prey espied the hen and her brood, and darted down upon them. The terrified hen called her young;

the twelve that were close to her took refuge under her wings and were saved; but the three that were roaming did not hear her cry and were eaten up. Your Reverence," added the old man, "you are the hen. The twelve chickens are the people of Brownsville. The three scattered chickens are the rancheros. The hawk is the devil, who has always some victims amongst us." Astonished at first, I heard out this allegory with a good deal of interest, but not one laughed. My surprise, however, ceased, when I recognised, in my interlocutor, a worthy old Mexican priest, who had for some years past fallen into second childhood. Not losing self-possession, I said on this subject to my good rancheros:

"The Holy Scripture tells us that the 'devil goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour'; but if we remain ever faithful to the law of God, if we observe his commandments — in a word, if we live as good Christians,—we have nothing to dread from the spirit of evil, and we shall die worthy children of God."

After mass, I took a slight collation, and, accompanied by my guide and several rancheros, I pursued my journey to a village where I had a marriage and several baptisms to perform. We had to pass along a pathway so narrow, tortuous and obstructed, that it was with much ado our horses could make their way through the briars and branches that crossed us in all directions. We then passed over glades and prairies where the earth was so light and soft that sometimes it gave way under our horses' feet. The rancheros call these *tierras falsas*, (treacherous grounds): after rain they are very dangerous; man and horse sometimes sink and disappear in them, as in shaking prairies. We then saw a large number of wild turkeys and roebucks that made off on our approach.

We arrived without injury at our destination in the afternoon of the same day. The village consisted of fifteen or twenty tents at most, raised on the edge of a forest and an immense plain of maize, watered by the Rio Grande. In order to impart more solemnity to the religious ceremonies, it was determined that their celebration should take place next morning after mass.

The village was crowded with rancheros who had come a long way, I should think, with a few exceptions, rather to dance the fandango than to assist at mass. Some lived so far as fifty miles off, a circumstance that may give an idea of their passion for dancing, and of how little they make of time and distance. When evening came, a stage for the musicians was erected beneath an oak; the benches for the rancheros were put in position; a meal hogshead, whose ends were replaced by parchment, answered for a big drum; while a clarionet and mandoline completed the orchestra. Lanterns were suspended from the branches of the trees, and the ball commenced.

The preaching, long fasts, and fatigues I had to undergo on like occasions, used to give me a violent headache, not much remedied by the sound of the big drum. I went to bed. The bed destined for me was in the hut of the future bride. Near the bed was the greater number of the family, who talked and bawled and laughed in such a manner as to keep me from rest, even if my fatigues had allowed it.

I lay down in my clothes; and to increase my enjoyment, a multitude of insects of every kind rose up in war against me. Unable to enjoy either quiet or sleep, I got up, and went out for a walk in the outskirts of the village; but falling down from lassitude and sleepiness,

I betook myself to an old cart, which I espied in the distance, and perched myself on its pole, which had been squared with the axe. The effort I had to make to retain my equilibrium, kept me from rest, and in utter despair I went and threw myself at the foot of a tree, and passed the remainder of the night meditating on these poor people, whom I could observe by the pale light of the lanterns, enjoying the sport of the dance. These dark shadows skipping in the distance beneath the branches of the mighty oak, to the horrid sound of the eternal *bum-bum*, presented a strange and fantastic picture. I thought of the witch dance. One of the dancers, under the influence of drink, or from sheer love of plunder, seized the opportunity to commit some thefts. He was caught in the very act, judged, and in punishment, tied to a tree for the rest of the night. He fell asleep; and during his slumbers, one of his judges stole his shoes off his feet. The robber awoke robbed.

At sunrise, the ball being over, I prepared the altar, as on the evening previous, under a tree. For want of a bell to apprise the rancheros of mass hour, I employed children, who ran from hut to hut to hurry on the loiterers. The entire congregation assembled around me were about five hundred souls. After mass and exhortation, I performed the marriage ceremony. The bride had to leave the same day with her husband for his place of residence, at a distance of fifty miles. During the ceremony her mother and relatives began crying; the bridesmaids joined in the chorus, and soon both bride and mother went off in a fainting fit. In my life I had never witnessed such desolation; but the Mexicans are never at a loss for tears. I then baptized five children, who capped the climax in this scene of tears, the whole five crying at once, with an energy of which

I could never have conceived them capable. I hardly understood the prayers which I recited, for my wretched aching head sang its own unheard airs. I feared I should go mad. Tears they say are contagious; so the ceremony was hardly over when I took my horse and escaped at full speed to Brownsville. I met Don Eduardo on my way. He was an Irishman who filled the post of receiver-general of the country and collector of taxes. Before his time, the constables received more gunshots than piastres, so that there was no great competition for the occupation. Don Eduardo knew how sweetness and moderation would render him acceptable and successful with the Mexicans. When they could not pay the taxes in kind, they gave cattle and commodities as equivalents. The collector sold the cattle and commodities, and found a profit in the sale. The Mexican got over the tax and the public demands were met, both sides were satisfied. The Irish are very clever in acquitting themselves in countries where they are driven by circumstances.

Don Eduardo was at this very time returning from the discharge of duty in which he had succeeded in paying all arrears, so that he was in the best imaginable spirits. Being naturally quaint and witty, his company gave me a good deal of pleasure. He was full of anecdote and adventure. He stopped at every rancho, and had a shake-hands with every one. He was co-father to all the inhabitants of the frontiers. I thought we should never reach Brownsville, for it was midnight, and we were only at Santa Rita. He asked me to sup with one of his numerous *co-gossips*. Hungry and tired as I was, I accepted the invitation. After the meal he examined his revolver and changed the caps. I

asked him if he had reckoned on killing any one on the way.

"It is possible," he replied, "we may be attacked in the Cut-throat for the sake of our horses, and especially of my money. It is well known that I have always piastres with me from my excursions."

"What you say makes me regret having joined you as a companion, and having been overtaken by night at a distance from Brownsville, for I have no arms."

"Oh! don't fear," he says, "it is moonlight; you will be recognised; and you know the Mexicans never injure a priest."

We continued our dialogue, and arrived at Brownsville without killing any one.

CHAP. VII.

MANTA TRADE. — CARVAJAL. — A WAR OF DEALERS. — COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES. — PRUDENT SOLDIERS. — AM ASSAILED WITH A VOLLEY AT A DISTANCE OF TWENTY PACES. — END OF THE SIEGE OF MATAMOROS. — BATTLE OF CAMARGO. — TWO CONQUERORS WHO DO NOT DOUBT THEMSELVES. — PRISONERS OF WAR. — ATTEMPTS TO ESCAPE. — HISTORY OF A PRUDENT GENERAL. — CONDEMNATION. — INFLICTION OF DEATH. — THE HOLY VIATICUM. — EXECUTION. — RETURN TO BROWNSVILLE.

THE trade in unbleached cotton stuff, or *manta*, is most important along the Mexican frontiers. The rancheros use an enormous quantity of it for inner and light garments and for manual purposes. The Mexican government, with a view of developing the manufacture of this article, gave a monopoly of it to fifty merchants, chiefly English and Spanish. The number of persons employed in it rose to 214,509; and from the establishment of the monopoly up to 1850, — seventeen years — the factories had issued upwards of fifteen million pieces of that material. Wishing to protect this branch of national industry, the Mexican government had laid such a tax on foreign fabrics, as amounted to a prohibition. This would have been a deadly blow to the frontier trade of Texas, had not smuggling assumed colossal proportions along the line of the Rio Grande, very inefficiently watched by about a dozen custom-house officers.

However, the merchants of Brownsville and those of Matamoros suffered alike from this state of things; for

the transit trade, being contraband, extended along the river banks instead of being concentrated in both towns. They conspired to excite a popular movement against the monopoly, and committed to General Carvajal the task of revolutionising the States of Cohahuila, Tamaulipas, and Nuevo Leon.

General Carvajal was a Mexican, brave and enterprising; more a distinguished soldier, I believe, than a good leader. He had been educated at a Jesuit college in the United States. He was of middle size, symmetrically formed, and had regular features: his lively eye spoke at once address and energy. During the war between Mexico and the United States, his part was somewhat equivocal. For some time he had cherished the project of rousing the Mexican frontier States, either to force the government to some administrative reforms, or to organise a little republic independent of Mexico, which should take the name of "The Republic of Sierra Madre."

General Avalos, commander of the Mexican forces of Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas, and Cohahuila got a hint of what was going on. Carvajal being at Camargo, a troop of lancers was despatched to arrest him, but he had timely warning of his danger, and escaped to Rio Grande city, whence he opened negociations with the merchants of Brownsville, for money, munitions of war, and all requisites for organising the insurrection. He promised twenty-five piastres a month to every recruit. A crowd of American adventurers, who had fought in 1846–7, were attracted by the hope of plunder and the love of novelty. A couple of hundred discontented Mexicans joined this troop. Carvajal marched on Camargo, which, for want of soldiers, was taken without a blow; but he lost precious time in waiting, doubtless

the fulfilment of the promises of the merchants of Brownsville and Matamoros.

Meantime these had changed their plans. Possibly they dreaded the frightful consequences if Carvajal was conqueror. They invited Avalos to a grand entertainment, at which they discussed the measures to be taken against Carvajal. It was shown that the government troops, not being sufficiently numerous to defend Matamoros with any chance of success, the national guard should be called out at once, and a supply of money and fire-arms provided. The merchants, who had no fancy for personal contributions, counselled the admission of American cotton stuffs at a low duty, which might be partially applied in suppressing the insurrectionary movement. The other money would naturally go into Avalos's pocket. This suggestion opened a smiling view before the general, who decreed forthwith the proposed reform, despite the remonstrances of the superintendent of customs.

Carvajal was entertained with promises, and halted at Reynosa, as he had before at Camargo; so that for eight days or upwards, bales of cotton crossed the Rio Grande that might be estimated at the value of half a million of piastres. This transaction was little known, and therefore little talked of. The Mexican markets had a supply for a long time; but the smaller frontier markets found no more outlet for their goods. Their interests had been sacrificed; and they gave notice of events to Carvajal, who in his fury committed to the flames some of the convoys of goods that were making for the interior. Unfortunately the goods had been sold at cash payments to the merchants of the interior, and they were the sufferers.

Carvajal at length turned on Matamoros, whence the civic authorities, though they had made such preparation against him, sent him a deputation to know his intentions, and pray him to discharge his American soldiers, engaging at the same time to arrange all things for the best, provided that his proceedings did not savour of foreign intervention calculated to wound the self-love of the nation. But he refused, alleging that he could place no reliance on their promises while Avalos, his deadly enemy, remained at Matamoros, and saying he could not dismiss his Americans, who were his very best soldiers.

Next evening, with about fifty men he took up a position in Fort Paredes. This fort, which is quite near the town, consisted of some embankments raised in 1846, to protect Matamoros against the army of General Taylor. The only gun in the hands of the assailants opened fire at once; but at the third round it became useless; on the second day, at ten o'clock in the morning, Carvajal seized upon the hut of the customs-collectors, situated opposite Brownsville. This was rather a piece of military parade than a stroke of strategy. The inhabitants of Matamoros fired a few ill-aimed shots at him, which fell on the other bank at Brownsville, and had the effect of putting to flight those drawn together there from curiosity. Carvajal then decided on forcing his way into Matamoros; and his column scattered itself through the streets, and began an irregular skirmish, in which each man fired on either side without aim or order. The fusilade soon re-echoed through every street.

A little after the firing began, General Avalos was hit in the thigh by a spent ball, and was at once

carried to his house. A few of the combatants, and some curious on-lookers, were either killed or wounded. At this moment Carvajal had only to urge on his soldiers a little to become complete master of the town; but these, instead of advancing towards the Plaza-Major, the centre of defence, adopted the more prudent plan of hiding in the houses, and advancing slowly by apertures made in the walls and partitions. The besieged taking courage, pointed their cannon against the houses that screened the assailants, and forced the latter to scamper for their lives. During the night Carvajal ordered his troops to re-enter fort Paredes. This was a stupid mistake. The besieged hastened to form lofty barricades with bales of *manta*, and to cover roofs with sacks of earth, from behind which Avalos' men could fire upon the besiegers, if they should attempt to enter again, while they themselves were quite protected. Thus the defence was better organised; and from this moment it might have been foretold that the hesitation, if not the incapacity, of the Americans had snatched from them a victory which was within their grasp.

I passed part of the night in spiritual attendance on some of Carvajal's men who had been wounded, and were taken from the Brownsville side to a temporary hospital. As daylight appeared, thinking there might be at Matamoros a good many wounded of both forces, and that the Mexican *curé* could not be equal to the task of attending all, I crossed the Rio Grande, and took a wretched nag, abandoned near the deserted hut of the customs collectors, and made off on him at a gallop, hoping thus the more effectually to escape the balls of both sides, between which I had to pass.

I penetrated without accident as far as the large street that led to the square; but I found myself at once in front of a strong barricade, and heard around me gun-shots without seeing a mortal. However, thanks to the bad aim of the marksmen, I got within twenty feet of the barricades without being hit. There were then thirty muskets aimed at me. It being too late to fly, I suddenly drew the reins, and driving the spurs into my horse's ribs made him rear erect, while *a volley was fired*, and a number of balls sped hissing past my ears, — I escaped, but the poor animal that served me as a shield, had three balls through his body, and fell before the guns could be reloaded. I ran to the barricade. The captain in command then recognised me, and was much distressed by what had occurred.

"Why the d—l have you come here without white colours?" he said to me.

"I did not think they were required when one was alone and unarmed," was my reply.

The barricade might be assailed every moment, and my position was becoming more critical. There was no time for wasting words; and I informed the officer of my errand.

"I am come to confess the dying; where is the *curé?*"

"You cannot see him. They are fighting in the streets."

"Where is the hospital?"

"Just hard by."

I ran to it, but was rather surprised to find there only four wounded. The fighting had continued for twenty-four hours. Several hundred cannon shot, and upwards of twenty thousand cartridges had been used,

yet the loss on both sides was only a few in killed and wounded. Blessed be God! the horses had suffered more than the men.

On leaving the hospital, a negro who had come there, I don't know how, addressed me by my name. Seeing that I looked at him with an air of surprise, he said:

"How is it you don't know me? I have a brother who is in the service of your bishop. I have another who is the servant of the Archbishop of St. Louis. A third is with the Archbishop of Oregon, a fourth who —"

I interrupted him, saying, "Tell me about your brothers another time. The place is not well chosen for a conversation."

Judging my presence at Matamoros unnecessary, I returned to Brownsville, where they thought I was no more.

The same evening Carvajal sent for me, begging of me to go and attend the wounded at Matamoros concealed in a certain spot, and who could not have been transported to Brownsville, either because their wounds were too serious, or that they were deserters from the United States' army. I went forthwith to Fort Paredes, where I found the general dining on sprats (*sardines*) and a bit of bread. I put myself at his disposal. Next day he sent me a Mexican guide, and I went on foot so that I might run less risk.

Arrived at the Rue du Commerce, at the end of which was a barricade and a battery of large guns, I heard a heavy explosion succeeded by a shrill whistling sound. A brick-house had fallen behind us. My companion fell, a ball carried away his thigh and abdomen. I took the unfortunate man to a neigh-

bouring street and knocked at several doors to find some one who would look after him; but all that were not in the conflict had fled to Brownsville. My position was becoming critical, and I knew not what to do, ignorant as I was of the place where Carvajal's wounded lay. Fortunately, an American officer who was passing by pointed it out to me. I discovered a wretched hovel in which lay stretched six men mortally wounded, while an Irish surgeon, a most worthy and devoted man, was tending them. I begged of him to go and see after my poor guide, and exhorted my patients, as I administered to them the last consolations of religion. Five of them unfortunately died shortly after.

Returning to Fort Paredes, I met a hundred of Carvajal's horse, who were going to encounter a hundred of Avalos' lancers, in the review ground near the cemetery. Both sides met, eyed each other at a distance, and returned to their quarters, each glorying in the other's not having dared to attack. The siege continued twelve days. Besides the firing, the only event was the burning of some houses, which was attributed to the Americans. The accusation seemed not without foundation, for they several times threatened to set fire to the town, if they did not take it; and as the Mexicans endeavoured to stop the flames and save the property, they were treated to a warm fusilade, which wounded some of their number. The flames threw a lurid glare to a considerable distance. This night too, was to me a restless one, for I had the task of re-assuring several afflicted families, who had abandoned their homes at Matamoros to take refuge in Brownsville, and had come to me to unfold their fears and sorrows,

which, among other things, the explosion of some barrels of gunpowder might well justify.

Carvajal withdrew at the tidings that Canales was coming to the relief of Matamoros at the head of a force of a thousand men. Canales had been the chief of a band of ruffians in the war of 1846-47, and was accused of having sometimes fought against and sometimes imitated the *guerilleros* in his indiscriminate plunder of American and Mexican convoys, at the head of his band of robbers and assassins. He had, they say, a daughter, who managed the lance with expertness, and commanded some expeditions. At the time of the treaty with Guadalupe Hidalgo, a price had been put upon his head by the Mexican government; but he succeeded in vindicating himself—nay, in obtaining the rank of Mexican general in active service. For personal reasons he detested alike Carvajal and Avalos. He would have wished to have found the latter put to the rout, and he put the former; so that he came quite leisurely, in order to give full time to Avalos to be beaten, but finding him victor, he got into right bad humour.

The Mexican government honoured the town of Matamoros with the title of "heroic town," as a reward for its brave defence. The people of Brownsville arrived in crowds to view the ravages of the war and fire.

Carvajal had withdrawn to Rio Grande city, and wished to re-enter Mexico; but, to avenge his defeat, he organized a new expedition. Canales was sent to Camargo to encounter him, and they met on the Camargo road, where Canales' men riddled those of Carvajal from behind the brushwood. Then Colonel Nuñez, who commanded the Mexican portion of the latter, ex-

claimed, "We are betrayed—*sauve qui peut.*" It is thought that he himself was the traitor. Twenty-four of the Mexicans escaped to Rio Grande city. The Americans gave battle in the brushwood, and the firing continued during the night, without many casualties. On both sides the men posted themselves behind the trees for greater security. If the men escaped, the trees were the sufferers. Carvajal, seeing that his force was not strong enough to succeed, retraced his steps to Texas, which was only a gunshot from the battle-ground, and Canales, fearing a surprise, retired to the other side of the San Juan, which flows near Camargo to the north. A spy gave Carvajal intelligence of this retrograde movement, and he returned towards Camargo, with the view of entering the place before daylight; but at the same time the inhabitants informed Canales that Carvajal had retired into Texas; and the former, emboldened by this unlooked-for event, also turned his steps towards Camargo, where both armies found themselves face to face by their very efforts to escape each other. The conflict was comparatively bloody on this occasion. Carvajal, Johnson, and a third general, whose name I do not remember, were seen to charge in person, and to fire the one cannon which made up their entire artillery. His ammunition falling short, Carvajal was forced to retreat; and Canales proclaimed that his own retreat had been a strategetical movement. Thus did the war terminate.

The prisoners taken by the troops of Avalos were regarded rather as rebels and assassins than as prisoners of war; consequently, they were condemned to be shot a few months afterwards. Avalos, who had not yet recovered from his wounds, was furious against the Americans, and wished to give them a lesson for the

future. The execution was to take place three days after the sentence was passed, and I was charged by the Mexican general with their spiritual interests, and to prepare them for death. They were kept under guard in a room of the Lancers' barracks, which had been changed into a chapel. This barrack, which served also as a prison, was a large, square, brick building, in the midst of which was a court-yard, in which the prisoners walked while waiting execution. The entrance was by a large carriage-gate, opening into a corridor, at the end of which was the court-yard. The corridor was formed of two chambers, one serving for a gate, the other as a dormitory for the officers of the guard.

I entered, not without emotion, while the soldiers presented arms, and an officer led me to the chapel, of which the doors had been removed. At the sight of my French clerical costume the convicted flung themselves into my arms, with affecting demonstrations of sorrow and gratitude. A young Irishman, only twenty-two, hung on my neck, sobbing and crying, "Mother, sister dear, I shall never see you more." Both Catholics and Protestants shook hands with me, and thanked me fervently for having come to see them at that critical moment. Their despair wrung my heart, and instead of giving them consolation I began to join in their tears—and my tears were a consolation. Inwardly I prayed of God fervently to grant me the courage and strength necessary to discharge my duty.

It was only after violent efforts that I mastered my emotion, and begged of them to pacify their conscience before appearing in presence of the Eternal Judge. The American prisoners were not at all resigned; they

said that they had been kept in cruel suspense, and that the sentence was unjust. I recalled to their minds the conflagrations and murders of which they were the perpetrators, in an unoffending town, having only plunder in view; and that now it only remained for them to invoke the Divine mercy. I gave them some devotional books, and some tobacco, and promised to appeal for a commutation of punishment, telling them, at the same time, not to indulge in vain, sanguine hopes. They told me they had often written to their consul to interfere in their behalf, but that they had received no reply.

I waited on the English and French Consuls, who interfered in consequence with General Avalos, and I called upon him myself. He is a small, fat, rather olive-complexioned person. His black beard, and quick, sinister eyes, gave him a ferocious look. His father was a Mexican, his mother an Indian. The savage blood could be seen in the man. With polished, affable, and accomplished manners, he was stern, false, and vindictive. As he remained deaf to my prayers, I thought fit to remind him of a fact which I had on good authority, and which closely concerned him.

"I am going," said I, "to tell you a piece of history. A Mexican town had been attacked by a band of adventurers. At the outset of the combat the general of defence was wounded in the great square. He was taken to his own house; but, fearing that if the adventurers succeeded they might take and hang him, he got himself clandestinely conveyed, during the night, to a distant hut, leaving his troops to their own guidance. A curé of my acquaintance was aware of the fact. He might have revealed to the besiegers the hiding-place of the courageous general, and there was an end to the

war. But as there was at stake, not merely the life, but the honour too, of the general, the curé kept his secret. If you do not prove yourself to-day as generous as he did, to-morrow he shall publish this story in the journals, adding the names which I have not mentioned."

Avalos grew pale—his eyes flashed lurid lightning. Had it been in his power to plunge a dagger into my heart he would have done so without scruple; but as I trembled not, he thought me armed, and answered—

"Very good! the execution shall be deferred until I receive orders from Mexico."

This was all I wanted, for I knew there was a Spanish law, not repealed, in virtue of which, one condemned to death, who should leave the chapel for any reason whatsoever, could not be reinstated there, that is, his life was saved, for none were ever executed who had not passed three days previously in the chapel.

When I brought back this news to the prisoners they embraced me with transports, and the hope of life so lit up again within them that I felt alarmed. I did not feel sure of success; and I drew up in a hurry, with the aid of the curé of Matamoros, a petition, that went round among the ladies of the town, begging of General Arista, president of the republic, the life of the prisoners. It was not, in reality, good policy to put them to death, for their execution would be looked upon, on both sides, as an act of vengeance and a political assassination. It was even an imprudence, as by embittering the minds of Avalos' enemies, it might cost him his life.

To save the lives of these wretches, and calm public feeling, I wished to profit by the delay, to organise a

plan of escape. With some money this project could be accomplished, as I had only to make a hole in the prison wall, which was of brick, and hardly more than a foot in thickness. Besides, the building was solitary, and not strongly guarded, and the prisoners might, in a quarter of an hour, cross to the left bank of the river. But I was not seconded in due time. Among the countrymen of the Americans I only met with inertness, imbecility, and stupid threats against Avalos.

During these transactions, Colonel Nuñez, accused by the Americans of having caused the loss of the battle of Camargo, was obliged, in order to save his life, to beg of Avalos to put him in a place of safety, that is, in prison. He came then, under pretence of important business, to be a prisoner at Matamoros. Avalos, who did not relish him much, was not satisfied with his arrest only, but submitted him to a court-martial, and had him condemned to death. Nuñez found his protector had gone too far, and, fearing that the sentence might be put in execution, he fled, and took refuge in Brownsville, where his condemnation by the Mexicans restored him to confidence. This escape of Nuñez, who had been in the same prison with the others, stripped me of all hope of rescuing them, for it had the effect of rendering the surveillance more close, and the precautions more effectual.

At length an order came from Mexico to shoot the prisoners. This was on Saturday, and the execution was fixed for Monday. This order threw us into consternation; for we had been satisfied that Avalos, holding as he did his military commission from the President Arista, would not venture on any attempt at corruption or undue influence, either to please the president or satisfy his

own feelings of personal revenge. I had failed in saving the lives of these unfortunates. It only remained for me, with the aid of Don Raphael, a Mexican priest, to acquit myself of the awful mission of assisting them at the last hour. Their prison chamber was again changed into a chapel. An altar was made out of a long table. The report spread abroad, and the New Orleans papers repeated it, that I had bored a hole in the wall, by hiding myself in the altar, for the purpose of promoting the escape of the prisoners.*

* It is curious at times to see how facts are distorted by newspaper correspondents. The *Daily Delta*, of New Orleans, in its issue of 22nd June, 1852, thus describes the circumstances that accompanied this execution: —

. . . . . .

"I am now going to tell you of a murder, one of the most revolting that has been committed since the days of the Inquisition. You remember that in last October, about eight months ago, General Carvajal attacked Matamoros, and that the attack lasted eleven hours, &c. &c. In his retreat he was vigorously pursued by the enemy for two hours, and four of our men, who separated from the main body, were taken and cast into prison. They had been subjected to all kinds of hardships and barbarous treatment up to yesterday morning, when they were brutally put to death by order of General Avalos.

"I have to laud the conduct of some of the people of Brownsville on this occasion: — the Catholic priest, the Lieut.-Colonel [1], the Spanish Consul, Nosmand [2], and several other determined foes of Carvajal, seconded by the ladies of Matamoros, who pleaded the cause of the prisoners before the bloodhounds, so far as to obtain for them

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[1] I do not remember that the Lieut.-Colonel had aught to do in this business.

[2] The Spanish Consul was dead, and his secretary had no influence. The English Consul, however, entered with entire devotion into their cause. He left at my disposal 2000 *doubloons* (6400*l.*) to aid me in the enterprise. These consuls were not at Brownsville, but at Matamoros.

I had intended it, but could not accomplish my design. The hangings of the altar were constantly raised up. I was between two sentinels; and two companies of lancers, blunderbuss in hand, stood guard, one opposite the door, the other behind the wall, against which rested the altar. I confined myself to my sad and solemn duties.

The following morning being Sunday, the holy *Viaticum* was taken to the Catholic prisoners. The streets were strewn with flowers and branches — flags floated from the windows, garlands of stuff and silk handkerchiefs hung from the houses along which the Holy Sacrament was to pass. The *cortége* left the church, preceded by a military band playing a dead march, and the people followed praying aloud. From the depths of the prison I heard the plaintive sounds of the music and the murmuring prayers of the multitude. My heart sank; I felt weak. The prisoners knelt by my

a promise of escape. General Avalos was to withdraw the guard, under one pretext or other, during the night, and to give the priest time to bore a hole in the prison wall, through which the prisoners might escape. The priest, God love him, performed his task with a *crowbar*. A little before daylight, the work being finished, after his labouring at it all night, he passed into the outer court, the prisoners behind him, full of the hope of again seeing their dear parents and friends. They found a guard of fifty soldiers, instead of ten (the usual number), outside, who forced them again into their prison. The priest then called on Avalos, but was refused admittance. The poor fellows were taken out at five o'clock in the morning, and shot down before 300 soldiers. The sentence specified *eight o'clock*. They have been thus deprived of the last three hours of their life, which doubtless they were anxious to consecrate to God. Such facts and murders have raised a universal shout of disgust in this town. . . . . . General Avalos was burned in effigy yesterday.

"P. S. The prisoners were denied the last rites of religion — extreme unction. The priest's name is Abbé Domenech."

side, wept and prayed along with me. Well might they indeed. They were so young! and grief for the loss of life, an absent cherished family, which they were never again to see. Nature has her exigencies, to which the strongest will must yield. Poor fellows! seeing my emotion and my sympathy, they felt less lonely, they drew from me some strength to support their misfortune and think of God.

Don Raphael entered carrying the Blessed Sacrament. They flung themselves before him, and laid hold of the pyxis, imploring the Divine grace in a heart-rending tone, and that they should enjoy the privilege of "asylum," recognised by the law of the land. They were calmed with difficulty. The prayers for those in the agony were recited, and the Catholics received the Holy Communion. In half an hour afterwards, took place the collation of the dead. It is the custom that the priest share in this last meal of the condemned prisoner. I could not sum up courage to eat; but from courtesy and pity, I took some chocolate. Scenes of this kind do their work in the heart of a priest; and if it be not made of brass, the three days that he thus spends with condemned criminals are days of moral torture that leave behind traces not to be effaced.

In the evening the American prisoners received the tardy visit of their consul, of their minister, and of a doctor. These gentlemen brought with them coarse linen garments, that their countrymen might be decently clad for the ceremony of execution; and they returned home, after smoking cigars for an hour with the unfortunate prisoners. I could not refrain from contrasting this kind of philanthropic consolation with Christian charity. What an abyss divides them! I spent the

night in the prison with the criminals. I spoke to them of heaven, of the clemency and mercy of God, for they were greatly downcast. Some of them rolling about their haggard eyes, murmured some unconnected sounds; others continued dumb, their eyes fixed on the earth. From time to time one of the youngest allowed a heavy heaving moan to escape him, sometimes a cry of agony, while he wrung his hands. About two o'clock A.M., overcome with mental fatigue, they manifested a wish to sleep a little. I arranged my own garments in the shape of a cushion, on which they laid their heads. While they slept, I went out to breathe a little fresh air in the prison court where a Mexican officer, seeing me in my shirt sleeves, lent me a covering, lest I might catch cold.

The execution was fixed for seven o'clock. At daylight, I went to the church to say mass for the doomed criminals; but it being closed, I had to go to the priest's house to get the keys. There I was informed that the fatal hour had been anticipated. I returned in hot haste to the prison; but was late. The condemned had left, accompanied by a dozen other prisoners, detained on the same charge, but not as yet sentenced. The place of execution was an untilled field, about five or six hundred yards from the prison. The wretches were fixed to a kind of bench; but the handkerchiefs to blind them had been forgotten. The unsentenced prisoners did them the charity of supplying the want. One of them, whose arm had been fractured by a ball, tore off the bandaging and gave it to the young Irishman, who had specially interested me. With a cruelty unheard of, the uncondemned had been placed behind the others, and thus believing that they were about to be shot without trial

or judgment, they gave themselves up to the most violent despair. Two of them fainted. Eight soldiers were drawn up in two files before each criminal, and a battalion of infantry assisted at the execution.

When I saw that the prisoners had been already taken away, I ran to the place of punishment to rejoin them, to give them another word of consolation. But as I drew near, I heard a horrid discharge; then a second. They were no more.

I learned that a Mexican and a Scotchman received the first discharge while they continued to pray, and without blenching. The second was to put an end to them. The bodies were placed on a dung-cart, and conveyed to the cemetery. Slow and on foot, under the pelting rain, I walked behind the cart, from which the blood trickled down, recommending the victims to the mercy of God. The cemetery was two miles distant, and the way was slippery and swampy. When I arrived, from emotion and fatigue I could not stand. There were neither coffins nor graves to receive the dead. The Americans having got me to promise that I should have their remains conveyed to Brownsville, I waited on General Avalos to make the request, but could not gain admittance. Either from fear or some other reason, his door was closed this entire day to all but his officers. I returned to Brownsville in a sad condition, physically and mentally. These three days had preyed more on me than a year of missionary labour.

On my return to Brownsville, a crowd of people came to inquire about the entire transaction. Their curiosity vexed me.

"What have you been doing these six months," said

I to the Americans, "to save the prisoners? Your conduct has been that of men without heart or energy. You have not even sought to procure them some alleviation during their long and painful imprisonment. Though many among them were Protestants and Americans, it was a Catholic priest who made an effort to save them, who went to see them, to console them and to sweeten their lot."

I was heard in silence, and it was admitted that in this melancholy drama, there was but one humane and honourable part which no one had ventured to undertake, and which I alone, on my part, had filled with constancy, self-denial, hardships, dangers, and privations. Thus, from this day forward, I acquired great popularity along the frontiers, and had no more disagreement with any one.

CHAP. VIII.

A MASQUERADE.— REVENGE OF AVALOS. — COMICAL HEROES. — CONSOLATIONS. — CHRISTMAS. — HOLY WEEK. — CAPTAIN MOSES. — TOILETTE OF THE RANCHERO. — MOUTH OF THE RIO GRANDE. — NOCTURNAL REVERIE AT THE SEA-SIDE. — BAGDAD. — WALK TO BRAZOS SANTIAGO. — NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE. — PROJECT. — REMARKS ON MEXICO; AND THE INVASIONS OF THE YANKEES. — ADIEUS. — DEPARTURE. — SOUVENIRS.

SHORTLY after this execution, the Americans wished to be avenged on Avalos, and hanged him in effigy, as well as Manchaca, his counsellor of war. The scaffold had been raised on the bank opposite Matamoros; and two effigies had been paraded for three days on asses, followed by an *impromptu* masquerade, with a frightful uproar, and on the third they were hoisted on the gibbet, amidst boisterous acclamations. The people imagined they were offering a grand sacrifice to the shades of their countrymen.

General Avalos could see from his own house his effigy, swinging with the breeze. He did see it, and felt it, and soon made his anger felt also. A band of Indians, from the Mexican side, committed shocking ravages all at once along the Texian banks of the Rio Grande, from Santa Rita to Galveston. The steamship "Comanche" was repeatedly attacked by these savages during its passage up to Rio Grande city; and each succeeding day brought new tidings of murders committed

by them. As I was attending a sick person near Galveston, four Americans fell by the arrows of the Indians, near the hut where I was.

This last outrage roused the Americans to teach a lesson to the Indians who had taken up their quarters twenty-five miles from Matamoros, on the banks of the Rio Grande. Forty "good men and true" were brought together and marched against the enemy. They were commanded by a Yankee of Herculean strength, but of questionable valour. The little troop set out with as much hubbub as if they were going to the conquest of the world; and though the question was, who should accomplish the most daring feats, at the first encounter, the forty volunteers took to their heels. The expedition returned to Brownsville without sound of drum or trumpet, and it was well known by this time what hand guided the Indians. The American authorities addressed sharp remonstrances and ominous threats to Avalos, who had to despatch a force against the Indians, and they yielded without striking a blow, allowing themselves to be taken to Matamoros, where they got a field near the town, in which they quietly installed themselves.

They were the mildest creatures in the world, at least in their new abode. They were of great stature, and yellow copper-colour. Each family was differently tattooed, and the men's entire dress was a towel. The women were better provided for. I saw their children, eight or ten years of age, send an arrow through an apple at a distance of fifty paces, while some hit small coins at that distance. They sat the livelong day fishing on the banks of the river; and at a certain motion of the water, they became aware of the presence

of fish, invisible to civilised eyes. Off darted an arrow, and in a moment there mounted to the surface, a fish pierced right through. In the course of a few months, they were allowed to return to their solitudes; and thenceforth no more was heard of them.

After so many trials some holy consolations were reserved for me. Every day I saw scattered sheep coming to the tribunal of penance, such as had not approached the sacraments for several years. More than a hundred couples, who had lived in concubinage, begged the blessing of the Church on their marriage. On Sundays my church was filled with fervent rancheros, who had come, in spite of the inclemency of the season, even ten miles on foot to assist at the sacred offices. The soldiers of the garrison came sometimes, the band leading, to add éclat to our ceremonies. I bought at Mexico an organ, which I set up in the church to increase the solemnity of the ceremonies, and to direct the voices of our young choristers. At first I felt great disappointment on learning, that Brownsville had only one organist, who was engaged by the Episcopalians. Fortunately, I was on good terms with the Episcopalian minister, a young man of education and liberal views, and no bigot against Catholicism. He had even been on the point of becoming a Catholic, and was only prevented by his bishop, who himself some time after abjured Protestantism. He felt for my embarrassment, and as my services and his took place at the same time, he proposed that I should anticipate the time by an hour, and that he would postpone his by another. Thus the organist could perform successively in the church and the chapel. By this I had the benefit of seeing my auditory increasing by

—and received the Holy Communion with meditation and fervour. God abundantly recompensed me for my labours; and with profound emotion, I gave vent to tears, while preaching on the benefits of the religion of the Son of God. My parishioners, affected, for the most part, by my emotion, also wept. We felt the full force of the words of Our Lord,— "My yoke is pleasant and my burthen is light."

A Jew, a retired captain of a steam-boat, who used to attend regularly at our offices, and was greatly attached to me, shed abundant tears. His name was Moses,—one of the ugliest men breathing, but not the less kind-hearted for that. His face was red, wrinkled, and frightfully pitted with small-pox. His enlarged features had neither regularity nor symmetry. My dear friend, the captain, was a phenomenon of ugliness in his normal state; but his grimace while weeping made him something frightful. I confess this grimace made a certain impression on me and rendered my discourse less impressive. Meanwhile a ranchero, who felt it no doubt rather warm, coolly took off his shirt in the church; but in an instant the sun darted his burning rays on his naked shoulders and the ranchero threw his shirt over them and tied the sleeves across his breast. Doubtless this toilette produced on my auditory an impression analogous to that which the grimace of Captain Moses had produced on myself. It was that of cold water thrown on fire; for at the end of my sermon the tears were all dried.

After the Easter holy days, I went to visit the portion of my mission which I had hitherto but imperfectly known. As it was but thinly inhabited, this visit was to be only a kind of vacation. Captain Moses offered

me hospitality in a house which he had at the mouth of the Rio Grande, and I accepted the offer. We set off together in the steamboat that plied between Brownsville and Brazos.

The distance, by water, from Brownsville to the mouth of the river is about eighty miles, but as the crow flies, only thirty. You would imagine that the Rio Grande, no less than the savage, regrets leaving this valley, at once so wild and beautiful. It hesitates, and makes a thousand windings before losing its identity in the depths of the sea. The banks are less picturesque than to the north of Brownsville, being flatter and more wooded, indicating the proximity of the sea. According as the gulf is neared, the land becomes arid, sandy, or marshy, trees more rare. The Spaniards of the sixteenth century well designated this coast by calling it *Costa Deserta*. It is a veritable desert. Some tufted sand-banks meet midway, and two or three ranchos are the only things that break the monotony of the road. A little before sunset, we arrived at a village at the mouth of the river. The dying fire of the day-star flung into space rays of reddish hue which were reflected by the sea, which seemed like a lake of blood.

The Captain's house was an old *entrepôt* of munitions of war, abandoned since the time of the American invasion. The building, which was large, and of wood, was then occupied by a quantity of rusty old iron, the remnants of wrecked vessels, either sold or abandoned. A bed, capable of accommodating four or five, was in the midst of broken anchors, severed chains, gaping lanterns, and other instruments of like nature. The Captain, with wonderful *sang froid*, honoured me with his apartment. The bed being between five doors and two windows, I

could not want air; but, for sleeping, I had calculated without the musquitoes, which are more numerous here than in Galveston.

Not being able to close an eye the whole night, I got up, and went to take a walk by the sea-side, to which the silver moonlight pointed out my path; I climbed the white sand-banks that skirt the coast, and took my seat on the débris of a wreck, washed ashore by the waves. I contemplated, with mixed pleasure and sadness, the extent of this calm, fair sea, wrapt in the silver rays of the moon. The waves died away on the shore with a regular, monotonous sound. Some light, grey clouds hovered in the firmament, and the cry of the night-birds mingled with the murmurs of the waves, while a light breeze refreshed the tepid atmosphere of this solitude.

At the sight of this spectacle, so grand, so poetic in its simple beauty, and of which I happened to be the only observer, I felt, in a manner, inspired. I turned my eyes towards France, from which a space of nine thousand miles separated me. I thought, that if death did not overtake me in the midst of my missionary duties, how I should soon be obliged to drag along, in my own country, a debilitated frame, a mutilated existence, henceforth without use or aim. For the second time my strength had brought me to the moment of gathering the fruit of my labours. For the second time my frail skiff was shattered on the rock of sufferings, at the moment of entering port. The "Sic vos non vobis" of Virgil then recurred to memory. Cruel thought, which darted across my mind like a temptation of the evil one. I called to mind the words of St. Paul, "What have you that you have not received? And if you have received, of what do you glory?" With reason

could I repeat, at this moment, the words of the gospel, "I am a useless servant." And I was so young; my short career had been so eventful, I had lived long in a short time. One consolation remained to me; it was, that I had never looked on the past with regret; and I hoped that God would take into account the days I had spent, my labours, my hardships, and sacrifices. With a mistaken zeal, perhaps, for the glory of God and the salvation of my neighbour, I had, without doubt, been imprudent, and thus hastened the ruin of my health. But, can man be always a sure judge in his own cause? I might have often deceived myself; but, having acted only from the best intentions, I had some ground to trust to the mercy and goodness of God.

Full of these sweet thoughts, that battled with the sadness of my soul, I at last fell asleep on the sea-weed upon the strand, beneath the starry heavens, and lulled asleep, as it were, by the monotone of the waves breaking on the lee-shore.

I devoted the next day to visiting the occupants of this wretched village, composed mostly of little, wooden houses, extremely low, and built up against the sand-banks. I found here two Irish families, with whom I passed two long hours, chatting about green Erin, their dear, native land, with its poetic memories, the privileged land of fairies, ghosts, ballads, and legends.

In the evening, the few families come down to enjoy a bath in the tepid waters of the gulf. I went with my esteemed Captain, who never left me. I then passed over to the other side of the river, and set foot on Mexican soil, to visit Bagdad, another village, situated near the mouth of the Rio Grande. This wretched

place bore no resemblance to the oriental town, once the abode of Harûn-al-Rashid. Some reed huts, plastered with mud and oyster shells, gave shelter to a dozen Mexican families, whose existence was a problem to me, for, to a distance of twenty miles all round, there seems no trace of cultivation. Sometimes there arrives at Bagdad a sloop from Tampico, loaded with bananas, ananas, cocoa nuts, and lemons. These fruits are immediately exported to Matamoros and Brownsville, where they find a good market. Near my Captain's house I observed large, wooden edifices, half in ruins, inhabited by Americans, who spent their existence in fishing and hunting. In the evenings, before sunset, they meet to smoke, to read the papers aloud, and to discuss politics. Eccentricity and feelings of independence must be pushed far enough to make people live thus in deserts, without name or shade, and spend in solitude and inaction a life without aim.

Brazos Santiago not being more than four miles from the mouth of the Rio Grande, I went there on foot with the Captain. We followed the beach. The strand was strewn over with a triple row of wrecks, for the most part half buried in the sand. As we walked along, we discovered an enormous quantity of table glass, five barrels of old brandy, which had been there for many years, and three hogsheads of rum, bearing date 1825. We then crossed a narrow channel, only two feet deep, which took us to the island in which Brazos is situated. On entering the island, I met an Irish family that lived on the produce of oyster fishing. The oyster banks, which are very numerous on the Texian coast, are almost at the water's edge, which ren-

ders the fishing easy. I observed, near the Irish cabin, hens picking the open oysters—they lived upon them. There was also a horse, but I dared not ask what provender they gave him: I feared they might answer "Oysters."

At Brazos I baptized a child; but having little to do, I returned the same evening to the mouth of the Rio Grande. To pass the time, the Captain and myself chanted the litany of the blessed Virgin. The Captain loved music much, and especially the litany; and when we were alone, he often said to me, "Let us sing the *Ora pro nobis;* it is so pretty." What a duet—an invalid priest and a Jew chanting the praises of Mary!

After a rest of eight days in these parts, I returned to Brownsville by land. The route over upwards of fifteen miles, passes through vast swampy plains, covered with jungle. Midway, I saw a neat rancho, situated on a small elevation, and shaded with beautiful green oaks. I stayed a short time, to drink some milk, and to know if the rancheros had need of my ministry. I then entered rich pastures, in which large flocks of sheep roamed and bleated at pleasure.

Returned to Brownsville, I was obliged to desist from my extensive missions, and to confine my visits to the sick. I seldom preached, not even on Sundays. I had seen the last of my strength. Every sermon cost me oceans of blood, issuing from my shattered lungs. My nervous, spasmodic fits had become so frequent, that I was also forced to abstain from celebrating the holy sacrifice during the week.

About the middle of the year, we celebrated at Santa Rita the feast of our Lady of Guadalupe, the patron saint of the Mexicans. The principal proprietor at

Santa Rita, intending to go to live at Bahia, wished, for the last time, to impart to this feast all possible solemnity. For this end he invited singers and several others from Brownsville. On the eve of the feast, about twenty-five of us went on horseback, conducted by this rich ranchero, who started off at a gallop, all following through clouds of dust, raised by the horses' hoofs.

On our arrival at Santa Rita, we found seven or eight hundred rancheros, assembled from the surrounding country. As this crowd could find no cabins to sleep in, it divided itself into groups, which encamped in the gardens, in the court-yards, and even in the streets and squares of the rancho. There was a large square in the centre of the rancho. The chapel, situated to the north of the place, and made with stakes, sunk in the earth, and potter's clay, had a thatched roof. The belfry, which was completely separated from the body of the church, was of the shape of a gibbet and mounted two old Mexican clocks.

Shortly after nightfall, we repaired to the chapel. The litany of the blessed Virgin was sung in chorus, as also vespers, and then we formed a procession by torch-light. Young girls in white bore on a pole, ornamented with streamers, flowers, and draperies, an image of the patroness of the Mexicans. They were followed by musicians playing the violin and mandoline, while I walked alone after them, and the people followed close behind. All bore lighted torches or lanterns in their hands, and recited the rosary aloud. As we passed in front of a cabin, the procession was saluted by the discharge of a gun, a rocket, or musket.

I rarely witnessed a more interesting spectacle. These white gowns, that portable altar, covered with lights and

flowers, these torches, this singing in the midst of silence and darkness, made a deep impression. After the ceremony came the amusements. For an hour the men assailed one another with harmless rockets, which were thrown and exploded amidst bursts of laughter; and as no feast, even religious, terminates without a fandango, the dancing saloon was fixed in a spot where the grass was shorter and more sparse. Coffee was kept boiling in a huge kettle, and distributed gratuitously; and the dance opened. The crowd assembled for the celebration of the feast being greater than had been expected, provisions soon became scarce, and coffee alone remained. Experience had taught me what noise is made on such occasions; I therefore went to spend the night beneath a fig tree, away from the ball. Next morning I offered the holy sacrifice in the chapel, and preached for the last time.

After mass, the greater part of the guests were half starved, and loth enough to return home fasting. I was of the number, and therefore proposed to go and have breakfast at the rancho of Doña Stefanita, situated three miles from Santa Rita. We set off on horseback, to the number of thirty. Doña Stefanita, a small, shrivelled old woman, placed at our disposal, with patriarchal generosity, her poultry-yard and her provisions. A goat, some hens, and melons supplied us with an abundant breakfast. Barring the Irish, I know of no people who exercise such cordial hospitality as the Mexicans.

In the month of March, 1852, Matamoros was honoured by a visit from a high government functionary of Mexico, General Don Emanuel Robbles, minister of war and of marine. By his valour and skill

he obtained a just celebrity during the siege of Mexico by the Americans. He then set about satisfying himself, personally, as to the military requirements of the frontiers. Having formed a design for the moral improvement of the people, and knowing the necessity of government support for its realisation, I got myself introduced to the general by the Mexican consul at Brownsville. I told him that I found a large population along the banks of the Rio Grande made little account of by staticians, and which, being abandoned to itself, was losing, gradually, its religion and its nationality. The children of the more comfortable classes were sent to the United States, to receive an education, sometimes prejudicial to their religious convictions, always to the detriment of their nationality. I offered to go to Rome to lay the question before the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda, and to ask him to divide those frontiers into regular, distinct missions, conducted by active, zealous priests, and numerous enough to found colleges and impart instruction.

"What will become of Mexico," I said, "before these Yankee invaders, who have already taken from it Texas, New Mexico, and California, if you do not make that sentiment which is the firmest bond of patriotism, the sentiment of religion, strike deep roots in the Mexican heart?"

In reality, the Mexican question is big with interest, for it presents the battle of an infant people that wishes to shake off its swathing bands, and to rise from the deep rut into which the jealousy of the mother country threw it, by reserving to herself extravagant monopolies. In spite of the concessions and liberal laws of Charles III., in 1778, Mexico has been crippled by the restric-

tive commercial system, and the systematic preference accorded to Spanish-born merchants. Thus, after its declaration of independence, in 1822, the new empire had to encounter unheard-of difficulties in its fresh political organisation. After the reign of Hurbide, which lasted only one year, came the Republic, which had to combat at once incapacity and ambition. All the chiefs of the work of independence would seize for themselves the fruits of victory; and, instead of uniting to commence the work of reform, political and commercial, they made war on one another, sometimes covert, sometimes overt, but which always ended in the overthrow of one of the idols of the hour. The incapacity and venality of the government, joined to the apathy of the governed, have made the history of this charming country a series of risings (*pronunciamientos*), which have often deluged Mexico and the provinces with blood. Part of the army obeyed the general who immediately commanded, and fought against the section commanded by another general. The administration was always seized upon by the partisans of the president, who frequently saw power snatched from his hands by an *émeute*. The ordinances of government, both fiscal and administrative, marked as they were with the seal of official incapacity in political economy, were but ill-suited to the particular requirements of the distant provinces. The president, who forced himself on the country, was generally the officer most adroit or daring. These men, while they upheld order by force and energy, enacted reforms to meet the momentary necessities of the government, but which had the effect of impoverishing the provinces, and curbing commercial enterprise, under the pretext of developing

the internal resources of the country. A lame and false pretext, for in paralysing the commerce of the provinces the rulers destroyed the means essential to the development of private industry.

In the old Spanish provinces a general wins his epaulettes without much ado; but in a rising republic the sword which rules and maims must give place to mind, which organises and directs the general interest. But, unfortunately, the Mexican generals were not all endowed with administrative faculties of this order.

If Mexico still feels her way to get out of this slough, and to go forward in the way of progress and civilisation—if she has within her so many disorganising elements, how can she resist this colossus, ever astir, this neighbour so ambitious and unscrupulous in his manner of invasion, which has his foot ever on her neck to carry off her fairest provinces? Empires, like men, require the experience of suffering. The experience of others rarely profits any one. Mexico, if she means to rise to the level of European civilisation, and oppose an impassable barrier to the Yankees of the United States, must fight and suffer more. But in the end she will succeed, for she has the principle of vitality within her, great intellects, great passions, and even patriotism. For the moment all this seems to slumber, but its waking hour is drawing near. Force is not enough to swallow up a country. Besides, the United States have a hideous sore that consumes them—slavery. In discussing those questions of the future, I observed to Don Emanuel Robbles—

"Mexico possesses the fairest and the richest provinces in the world, and the Catholic faith is a powerful weapon of defence against American aggression. She

will never be ruled by a Protestant country. The days of conflict and trial may return; then shall bold and intelligent minds rise up, made more numerous by religious training, which enlarges the intellectual powers of each man, gives all serious ideas of their duties as Christians and as citizens, makes them feel by a more accurate knowledge of the gospel and moral precepts all the dignity of their nature, teaches them to give God what is due to Him, and Cæsar what is due to him, that is, to their country."

Don Emanuel Robbles perfectly understood the bearing of my project, and the national benefit that would be its result. He gave it his approval, and gave me letters of recommendation to the Mexican minister, at the court of the Holy Father. I communicated my views to Don Raphael, who was to accompany me to Rome, and who had a letter from General Arista for the very same purpose.

By this time I had no more strength left me. My works could no longer keep pace with my will, no longer could I pursue my duties. Nervous spasms, fainting fits, spitting of blood, forbade the smallest fatigue. The priests promised to be sent to my aid had not arrived. I went to Galveston to see after them, and to inform my ecclesiastical superiors of the absolute necessity of my returning to France. I then returned to Brownsville, where, for a month longer, a martyr to sufferings, I was dragging along an exhausted frame, a spent existence, without ever stirring from that town that I loved so much, and which, for the space of eighteen months, was witness to my energy, ardour, and zeal, such as it was, in running about in all directions to succour the unfortunate.

Three priests of the Oblats of Mary were to replace me in the month of September. I was resolved to depart in the end of that month. My departure was sadder this time than when I left Castroville, for a return was out of the question. I was like one of those worn-out instruments, no longer of use, which are hung up in a corner to become gradually the prey of rust. Except a place of retreat and a last asylum, of which I had none, I resembled those military invalids, whom honoured scars have deprived of their means. I felt sad —much less indeed from the egotistical thought of a wintry future, of a clouded threatening horizon, towards which I was about to proceed, than from the deep affection I bore these strange people, to whom I had become thoroughly accustomed, an affection but too well returned. I had much difficulty in tearing myself away from the families which I was visiting for the last time. I felt as if I were one of them.

In fine, after my last adieu, I threw myself into a coach that was starting to Brazos. Among the passengers was a creole woman with an infant at her breast; she was going to New Orleans to rejoin her husband. The mother and the child, of whom I knew nothing, were *recommended* to me by an *American*, of whom I knew just as much. These recommendations, which would look so odd in Europe, are quite matters of course in the United States. They are quite honouring — but in general strangers have no desire to assume the responsibility of watching over unknown ladies during a considerable journey, and especially as they treat you with incredible unceremoniousness and freedom.

Arrived at Brazos I again saw my old friend Captain Moses, who had not grown more handsome. He made

me a present of several Indian silk handkerchiefs and filled my pockets with boiled prawns, as prog for the journey. We both wept sincerely in giving the parting embrace. This was the last mark of sympathy that I was to meet in this strange land. What a singular coincidence! The first was given by an Episcopalian; the last by a Jew.

A storm detained us eight days in the gulf. On the 21st of September, at midnight, we struck upon an oyster bank, and were for two hours hanging between life and death. A ship was wrecked a couple of hundred yards or so from us; and at the mouth of the Mississippi, we observed another on fire. I made no stay anywhere during my journey. I was unfortunate enough to have some fresh recommendations to Paris — recommendations which occasioned me a world of embarrassment and annoyance.

I remained a few days at Lyon in the bosom of my family, and then pursued my journey to Rome. My project for establishing Mexican missions was approved of by the judicious and zealous Secretary of the Propaganda; but before its accomplishment it should meet with the sanction of the Mexican prelacy. I reckoned on returning to Mexico to obtain this necessary sanction: but alas! man proposeth, God disposeth. Man's power is very limited here below. Bodily infirmities obliged me to remain some time in Italy. Medical skill declared my active career at an end — at an end, alas! when the greater part of my *confrères* were hardly commencing theirs.

And now, in the hours of solitude, the recollections of the past group themselves in sad array before my mind, like pictures always present, spreading over my

soul a sweet and dreamy melancholy, of which I cannot divest it. European life is to me cold, colourless, pitiful. My regards, for ever turned towards those old solitudes, those deserts peopled with dangers and red skins, tawny animals, and rattle snakes, could not rest on this narrow horizon, whither my sufferings had conducted me. The cloister smiled before me like a desert-island, in which I might seek shelter after shipwreck. Seated on the banks of life's rapid torrent, I see before my view these even now distant pages of my existence, like so many leaves transported on the wings of the wind towards the ocean of eternity. And with a tear trembling in the eye, and a sigh quivering on the lip, I murmur with my Master—"Lord, let thy will be done."

THE END.

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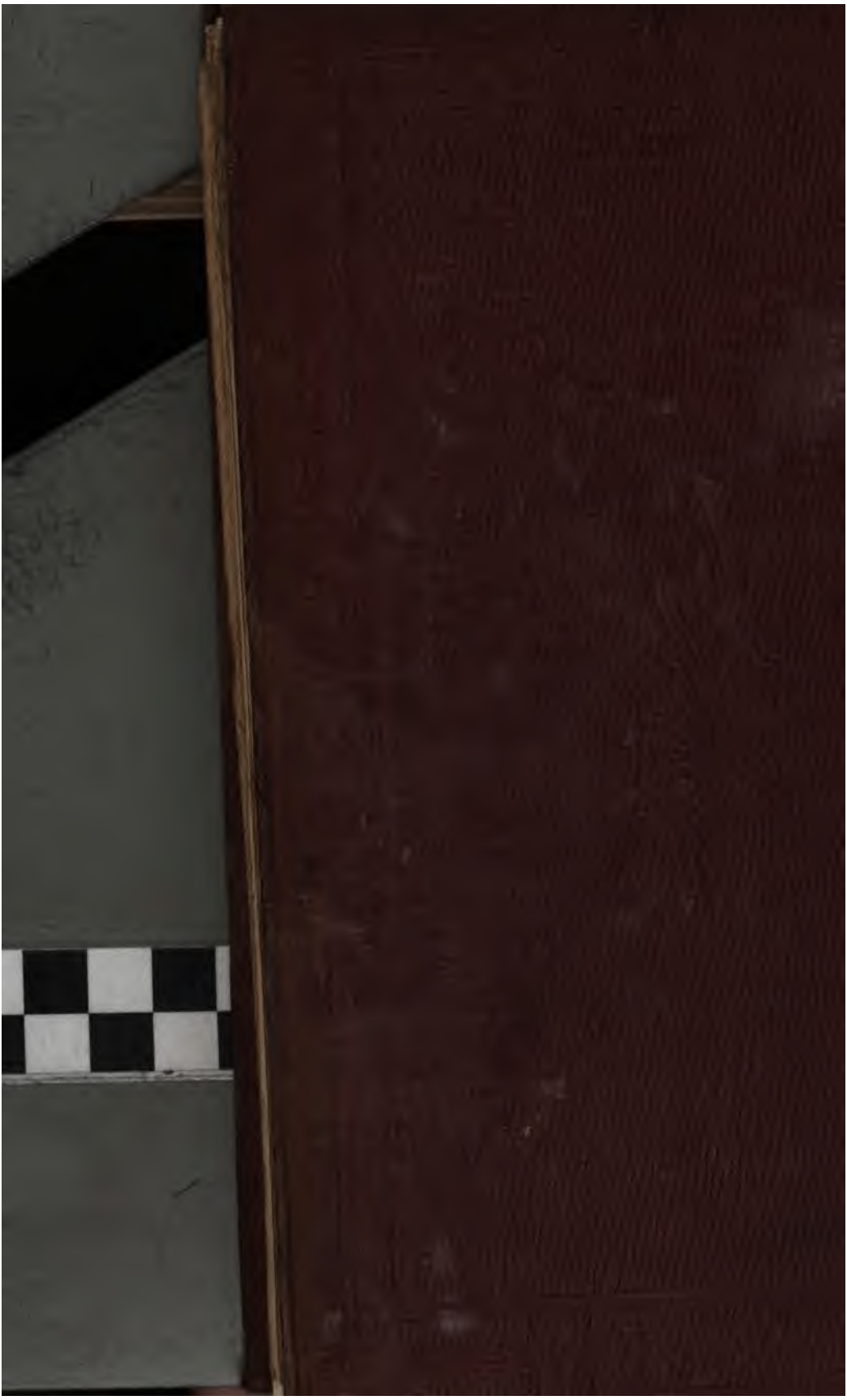
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